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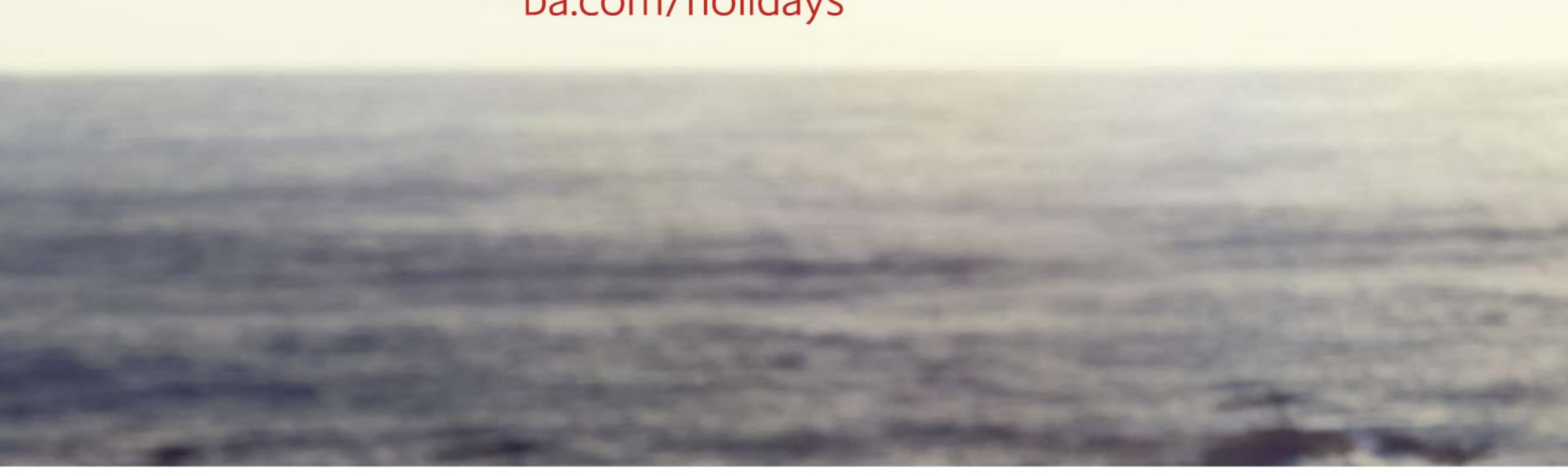
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# ED'S LETTER

THERE ARE A WHOLE HOST OF SUPERHERO TROPES and conventions that we're now all achingly familiar with: a brightly costumed good guy, his identity symbolically emblazoned across his chest; the brutal midnight slaying of a loved one that must be avenged; the smoking-hot female hero blessed with powers of the mind, but rarely of the body (unless you count the ability to wriggle into *those* costumes a superpower). Now a ripping up and setting alight of (most of) these has come from the most surprising source. Ryan Reynolds — yep, *that* Ryan Reynolds — is the man responsible for bringing arguably one of the most compelling, interesting and subversive big-screen comic-book characters ever to the screen. I'm talking about Deadpool.

The story of the writer, star and producer's decade-long battle to bring his passion project to life is as rich as that of the character he plays. There was an early unsuccessful iteration, a writers' strike and false starts with studios, not to mention the fact that he was dealing with a creation unlike almost any other. Not only is he a good bad guy (a disfigured, psychotic good bad guy) with the potty-mouth of an inebriated sailor, he is acutely aware that yes, he is a fictional comic-book invention and repeatedly breaks the fourth wall to address us, the audience. But just to really keep us on our toes, he has a moral core of steel and is funny as hell. Want a taster? Skip ahead to p.66, where Deadpool himself gets involved in our cover story. He wasn't even invited. But would you argue with a hired killer armed with one-liners that can make your hair curl? Thought not.

*Deadpool*, however, is just the start of what is set to be another wonderful year for film and TV. We've chosen the 32 things you absolutely must see in 2016 and there is a whole load more at empireonline.com. The only thing you have to worry about now is where you'll find the damn time. Hey, who needs sleep, anyway?



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PHILIPS

# PREMIERE

EDITED *by* CHRIS HEWITT



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

# THE TRANSFORMER

## MICHAEL BAY CHANGES DIRECTION WITH *13 HOURS: THE SECRET SOLDIERS OF BENGHAZI*

"PEOPLE HAVE TRIED to peg me my whole life," says Michael Bay. "'You can only direct commercials', 'You can only direct big movies.' But it's not about the money, it's about the passion I had for this project."

He's talking about *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers Of Benghazi*. The story of a September 11, 2012 terrorist assault on an American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, and the resistance mounted by a small group of ex-special forces CIA contractors (led in the movie by John Krasinski's Jack), it seems to have all the elements of a Bay movie: action, patriotism, manly men doing manly things. But it cost just $50 million — that usually doesn't even cover Optimus Prime's oil bill — and Bay says it's very un-Baylike. "It's not supposed to look pretty," he says. "There are no cheap shots in it, no one-liners. It's partially like a horror movie because these guys don't know who's good and who's bad. It's a very scary situation. It's got a real honesty."

The US Secretary Of State at the time of the attacks, who ended up taking the blame for the security failings, was one Hillary Rodham Clinton. And the film will open just as her campaign to become the Democratic Presidential candidate is ramping up for the crucial Iowa caucuses. Could it possibly derail Clinton's bid for the White House?

Bay is far too savvy to tackle that hot potato directly. "It's not 'America rah rah'," he says. "It's a human story, it's not about the politics. It's not political in any way." Let's ask Hillary Clinton in about a month if she agrees. OR

***13 HOURS: THE SECRET SOLDIERS OF BENGHAZI* IS OUT ON JANUARY 29.**

# 9 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... INFERNO

***EMPIRE* TAKES A DANTE'S PEEK INSIDE THE NEW ROBERT LANGDON MOVIE**

IT'S BEEN SEVEN years since Tom Hanks last filled the Hush Puppies of Dan Brown's symbologist Robert Langdon, but he'll return to the role this October in *Inferno*, using his archaic knowledge to solve teasers that make *Only Connect* look like a doddle. We travelled to Florence to get director Ron Howard and his cast to decipher *Inferno*'s secrets in nine rings of info.

**1** *Inferno* is the third Langdon movie, following *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) and *Angels & Demons* (2009). There are four novels in Dan Brown's series, but the filmmakers have skipped the third, 2009's *The Lost Symbol*, which was set in the US. "I love the international nature of this," says Howard of the decision. "As an American, part of the excitement for me creatively is directing people whose roots and sensibilities might be slightly different from mine. I take inspiration from that."

**2** The Langdon movies have made $1.2 billion worldwide, perhaps the most successful franchise never to boast a toy line. Yet Howard barely acknowledges them as sequels. "I haven't thought of them as movies that are trying to benefit from a predecessor," the director says. "It's following the Robert Langdon character on another experience." Hanks, though, feels it isn't entirely a clean slate. "Everything we have done to this point has contributed to the motivation and the mindset of Robert Langdon. We don't have to talk about the past. We carry it with us more-or-less in every scene. That is a luxury for any actor, not having to go through the storybook in order to make an introduction."

**3** This time around, Langdon is on the trail of Bertrand Zobrist (Ben Foster), a mad genius scientist obsessed with *Inferno* (Dante's, not Dario Argento's) who is hell-bent on solving the world's population problem by releasing a killer virus. It's a familiar mixture of puzzle-cracking, literary and religious symbolism, foot chases around picturesque landmarks, and shady organisations. "I feel the elements that make the movies work are in the DNA of Dan's stories and the settings," says Howard.

**4** *Inferno* shot under the working title *Headache*. And Langdon starts the movie with a doozy, waking up in a hotel room in Florence with no memory of how he got there. "Langdon is not sitting around Harvard waiting for a call," says Hanks. "He is in the middle of it and has no idea what is happening to him. He doesn't have the facility he had in the other films, because literally his head is not quite working right, which really does alter the first two thirds of the film."

**5** The film shot in Venice, Florence and Budapest during the spring and summer of 2015. It was originally slated to come out on December 18, one week after *In The Heart Of The Sea*, directed by one... Ron Howard. It's not hard to see why *Inferno* was pushed back.

**6** Langdon has had a different companion in each adventure: here, Felicity Jones' Dr. Sienna Brooks follows in the footsteps of Audrey Tautou and Ayelet Zurer. To prep, Jones spent time with an ER doctor in New York, "watching her work under incredible pressure and make life and death decisions very quickly. Sienna enjoys the pressure of that."





**7** Rounding out the cast are Irrfan Khan as the mastermind of a sinister consortium working with Zobrist, Omar Sy as the leader of a secret paramilitary group and Sidse



Babett Knudsen, best known for *Borgen* and *The Duke Of Burgundy*, as the head of the World Health Organization, which hires Langdon to track down the virus. Hanks aside, no actor has appeared in more than one Langdon movie.

**8** A key MacGuffin in the story is Dante's death mask, a precious artefact preserved in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. It was once thought that the visage was Dante Alighieri's actual death mask, carved from his lifeless face. Yet scholars now believe it is the cast of a lost sepulchral effigy of the poet. Spoilsports.

**9** For his third go-round on the Dan Brown carousel, Howard is taking a different approach. "I've tried to use the psychology of what the characters are going through to alter the approach, to pick up the pace. It is more of a psychological thriller and that suggests different styles for me as a director. It's fun, not holding back." **IAN FREER**

***INFERNO* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 14.**

**Above:** Tom Hanks' Robert Langdon goes on the run with Felicity Jones' Dr. Sienna Brooks. **Left:** Ben Foster.

## ON THE RADAR



**Chris McQuarrie will direct *Mission: Impossible 6*, in which Tom Cruise will swallow the sun or something equally daft, the eejit.**



**Peter Jackson may direct a *Doctor Who* episode. Could be next year's Christmas special. And the year after that's.**



**As part of her attempt to appear in ALL THE FILMS, Alicia Vikander will star with James McAvoy in the thriller *Submergence*.**



***Alien: Covenant*, aka *Prometheus 2*, starts filming soon. Michael Fassbender's disembodied head has demanded its own trailer.**

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

# TOL STORY

## HOW THE BBC CUT *WAR AND PEACE* DOWN TO SIZE FOR A LAVISH MINISERIES

READING *WAR AND Peace* is not for the faint of heart. Over 1,400 pages long and full of stodgy musings about agriculture, Leo Tolstoy's 1869 novel about the Napoleonic Wars has acquired a daunting reputation. In *Cheers*, Sam stays awake for five days straight so he can read it to impress a girl, sighing, "They say the first 800 pages are slow, but it shoots off after that..."

But if ploughing through it is tough, try turning it into a TV series. It's a monstrous task, as director Tom Harper discovered when he took the reins on the BBC's new miniseries. "Every day I have my moment of, 'I can't believe how lucky I am,' followed by my moment of, 'FUUUUCK! How are we going to get through today?'" he tells *Empire* on set in Lithuania, where he's been using state-of-the-art tech (drones, CGI, fake horse poo) to shoot the war and opulent sets to shoot the peace. "Our shoot days in Russia were hard. The retreat from Moscow was tough. We had 250 people marching down an icy road, slipping and sliding. Our octocopter crash-landed. We got to film in amazing places, but as soon as you touched something someone would come along and say, 'Hands off the chair!'"

The BBC last adapted *War And Peace* back in the '70s, with Anthony Hopkins as heroic misfit Pierre. But that was 20 episodes; the new adaptation has just six parts. The compression was a further challenge for Harper and writer Andrew Davies. "What we've focused on are the human stories," says the former. "Once you take out a lot of the military tactics and the philosophy, it's amazing how little of the character stuff is missing."

The series boasts a terrific cast that might entice those who could be deterred by *War And Peace*'s highfalutin rep, from younglings like Lily James (who, as Natasha, gets a waltz to rival her big dance scene in *Cinderella*) and James Norton, to established heavy hitters like Brian Cox, Greta Scacchi, Gillian Anderson, and Paul Dano as the new Pierre. And Harper promises a grand, emotional experience. One thing's for sure: it'll be less effort than reading the book. "My arm started aching from carrying it around on-set," whispers Scacchi. "I had to rip it in half." **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

***WAR AND PEACE* AIRS ON BBC ONE FROM JANUARY.**










3



4

1 This would be the War part, then. 2 Paul Dano preparing to duel as Pierre. 3 Lily James' Natasha gets close to James Norton's Prince Andrei. 4 Gillian Anderson and Stephen Rea as Anna Pavlovna Scherer and Prince Vassily Kuragin.



## Yes!

HELEN O'HARA

Few things infuriate me more than the conventional Hollywood wisdom that female superheroes don't work. How can anyone believe that when the single most iconic female superhero has never appeared on the big screen? No, I'm not counting *The LEGO Movie*. Wonder Woman has endured false starts ever since the 1980s, with Ivan Reitman and a pre-*Avengers* Joss Whedon trying and failing to get her onto the big screen. Now she's on her way, and to quote Evangeline Lilly in *Ant-Man*, it's about damn time.

About as powerful as Superman and gifted with a mythologically tinged back story that has the potential for *Thor*-style family drama, Diana Prince/Wonder Woman comes to our world with a stranger's eye for absurdity and an innate sense of justice. The best Wonder Woman comics have explored both those epic roots and that outsider view, and with a film story that we're told will take in Diana's entirely female homeland of Themyscira, World War I Europe and the present(ish) day where we meet her in *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, this film should offer the opportunity for all three.

Beyond that, there is compelling evidence that Wonder Woman can work on screen, from DC's great animated output to the still fondly remembered, Lynda Carter-starring TV series of the 1970s. As a tiny child, I used to come home from playgroup complaining that the boys had built LEGO guns to use in the playground — but it was OK because I crossed my wrists and spun around, Carter-style, and the bullets all bounced off my (invisible) shield bracelets. Those boys have since had seven solo Batman films, six Superman films and one face-off/team-up of both. Where's my Wonder Woman movie, dammit?

This first image doesn't guarantee that director Patty Jenkins has nailed the character, although Gal Gadot's Diana looks the part. But combined with a cast that also includes Chris Pine as Steve Trevor, Robin Wright (as, I'm guessing, Diana's mother Queen Hippolyta), Danny Huston, David Thewlis, Saïd Taghmaoui, Elena Anaya and Lucy Davis, it's a promising start. With filming now underway in London, France and Italy, the most powerful woman in comics might finally be getting her due.



THE BIG DEBATE

# INTO THE WONDER

**THE FIRST PIC IS OUT! SO WILL *WONDER WOMAN* BE WONDERFUL?**



## I don't know!

CHRIS HEWITT

There's a saying we have at *Empire* Towers: every day is Christmas Eve. Which means that we treat each film, even if it looks awful or has Kevin James in it, with equal optimism. They're all presents sitting under our tree, and until the wrapping paper is ripped off, they could all be a bike! A TV! A *Lovejoy* box set!

In reality, though, there's usually that one present that you're not sure about. Perhaps it rattles when you pick it up, perhaps it's shaped suspiciously like a pair of socks, perhaps it gives off a questionable stench.

*Wonder Woman* could be that present.

As a kid, I really liked the Lynda Carter TV show, the one with the twirling transformation and the earworm theme tune. And I understand WW's place in the firmament as one of DC's big three, but I never thought her powers were as cool as, say, those of The Flash. He can run so fast he can travel through time. Wonder Woman has a lasso. Not just any lasso, mind — a Lasso Of Truth. No wonder it's been hard for Warner Bros. to get this character to the big screen, even in a world where Marvel managed to make a film about a guy who can shrink down to the size of an ant.

My scepticism has stemmed mostly from the slightly confused genesis of this movie. First, there were rumours that five writers were penning different drafts of the screenplay, which would then be compressed into one giant Frankenscript. Then there was the faffing with directors, with *Breaking Bad*'s Michelle MacLaren hired — briefly — before moving on, to be replaced by Patty Jenkins. I worry that, as it can be with Marvel, it will be hard for any director to impose their vision on something when the nuts and bolts of this universe have been decided in advance.

Don't get me wrong. I think Gal Gadot rocks. And I want this movie — and the whole DC Cinematic Universe — to be the best it can be. But I worry. I worry about tone. I worry about cohesion. I worry about the frickin' Lasso Of Truth. I worry that the rattling present under the tree could be a Kevin James boxset.

***WONDER WOMAN* IS OUT ON JUNE 23, 2017.**

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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

# GET SHORT

## HOW THE GUY WHO MADE *ANCHORMAN* DIRECTED THE YEAR'S ANGRIEST MOVIE

*THE BIG SHORT* IS many things. It's the first movie to tell the inside story of the collapse of the housing market in the US in 2007/08, which very nearly drove the world economy to the brink of collapse. It's very funny, as you might expect from Adam McKay, the director of both *Anchorman* movies. It's very clever, using every cinematic trick in the book, from voiceover and diagrams to celebrity cameos, to make its info dump of tricky terms more palatable. (If you don't know what a CDO is beforehand, you will afterwards.) But what you might not expect is how sobering and nightmarish it is — anger about the incompetence, deceit and fraud that led to the collapse emanates from almost every frame.

"It's an impossible story to tell without outrage," laughs McKay. "I don't know that chemically it can be done.

Steve Carell and Ryan Gosling in *The Big Short*. Hair not models' own.

Even if I said it in a silly voice. Which we kinda do."

Based on the non-fiction book by Michael Lewis, who also wrote *Moneyball*, *The Big Short* focuses on some unusual protagonists — financial wizards who realised that the housing-market bubble, formed of bad loans, was about to burst in a big way. So they decided to 'short' the market by placing huge bets against it. Very simply, if the housing market collapsed, they stood to (and did) become very rich, while ordinary people lost their jobs and homes. These men, played by an A-list










cast including Steve Carell, Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling and Brad Pitt (who also produces), are the heroes of the story. "I like the fact it's a messy hero's journey," says McKay. "I love that these guys are a little dirty. The big challenge to me is that you can end the movie with these guys making hundreds of millions of dollars and yet you don't feel good about it. There's no victory lap. Talk to these guys today and they all feel a little tainted by it."

If it seems strange that the bloke who made a film where Will Ferrell sings a song to a great white shark should then make a heavy-duty political animal that will be in the Oscars shake-up (it's been nominated for four Golden Globes), then you haven't been paying attention. All of McKay's films — yes, even *Step Brothers* — have a satirical edge, while he actually ended his 2010 cop comedy, *The Other Guys*, with an animated lecture about... the financial crisis. "Maybe the first two minutes of my first conversation with Christian Bale was me making a joke, 'You've seen *Talladega Nights*. This is not that,'" says McKay. "But anyone who knows me, like Will, didn't even blink." Speaking of Ferrell, this is the first film McKay's made without his great friend. "There is no schism," says McKay. "There was just no obvious character for him. He liked the idea that it was a little different, a little outside."

**From top:** Christian Bale's Michael Burry. Brad Pitt as banking guru Ben Rickert; Gosling and Adam McKay joke on set.

But since *Anchorman 2*, McKay has written *Ant-Man* with Paul Rudd and then recruited Steve Carell to star in *The Big Short*. Is he *sure* there isn't a schism? "Maybe Ferrell should read something into it," laughs McKay. "Maybe I'm in denial!" **CHRIS HEWITT**

***THE BIG SHORT* IS OUT ON JANUARY 22.**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

# SET PHASE 3 TO STUN

**FROM *BLACK PANTHER* TO *THOR*, KEVIN FEIGE SPILLS ON MARVEL'S LATEST PLANS**

THIS IS T'CHALLA. Also known as Black Panther, the newest hero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Glimpsed in the trailer for *Captain America: Civil War*, he'll get his own film in 2018, as Marvel ramps up its Phase 3. We asked producer Kevin Feige to talk us through Marvel's plans up to the cusp of 2018's *Avengers: Infinity War Part I*.

Marvel's latest hero: Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther, soon to be seen in *Captain America: Civil War*.



Kevin Feige, Marvel's head cheese.



Chris Pratt, soon set to return as Star-Lord.


Chris Hemsworth's God Of Thunder. Will *Thor: Ragnarok* see the end of his world?


Mark Ruffalo's Hulk will next be seen in *Thor: Ragnarok*.

## Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol. 2 (APRIL 28, 2017)

James Gunn's 2014 movie was the biggest surprise of the MCU to date, critically and commercially. Yet Marvel was so confident about what they had that they announced the sequel before the movie opened. Gunn will direct again, starting in Atlanta this February.

The plot will partially concern Peter Quill's (Chris Pratt) search for his father, and — as with *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* — will see upheaval in the ranks. "There've been many different incarnations of the Guardians over the years in the comics," says Feige, "and we'll catch a glimpse of additions over the course of the movie."

One thing it won't have, though, is Josh Brolin's Thanos, the Big Bad of the MCU, who was formally introduced in the first movie. "I wouldn't look too hard in that movie for Thanos," confirms Feige. So far, though, a being so apparently powerful he could wear the Avengers' heads for hats has been curiously unthreatening, preferring to sit in space on what looks like a floating portapotty. Will that change? "Are you asking if he's going to do more than sit in a chair and smirk?" laughs Feige. "Oh, yes. The next time we see Thanos he will not be messing around. It will be, 'Oh, that's why they've been teasing this villain for five years!'" The smart money's on *Infinity War Part I*, with Thanos coming to Earth to retrieve the Infinity Stone lodged in the noggin of Paul Bettany's Vision.

## Untitled Spider-Man Reboot (JULY 28, 2017)

Or, as that title is unlikely to stick, *Spider-Man*. After years of watching other people produce Spider-movies, with no great power (or indeed, great responsibility) over the character, Marvel and Sony have struck a deal to co-produce Spidey's new adventures. Feige is itching to get started, recruiting *Cop Car* director Jon Watts and British actor Tom Holland for a movie that he's described as having a John Hughes vibe, which hints at a smaller scale. "Smaller scale is all relative," he says. "It's going to be as big and spectacular a Spider-Man film as has ever been made. But it's a Peter Parker story and has more opportunity to be focused on the story of a 15 year-old kid going to high school." What's more, when we meet him in *Captain America: Civil War*, he's already a hero. No more origin stories. No more endless death for Uncle Ben. He'll be so relieved.

## Thor: Ragnarok

**(OCTOBER 27, 2017)**

If our knowledge of Norse mythology is up to scratch, the third Thor movie could well be the final Thor movie. For "Ragnarok" is, according to Norse legend, the end of the world. Not so fast, says Feige. "I don't think people will read into that title alone what the movie's going to be." Certainly, the choice of Taika Waititi, the deadpan Kiwi director behind *What We Do In The Shadows*, hints at something less than terribly apocalyptic. "It's going to be perhaps as tonally different from the two prior Thor movies as *Winter Soldier* was from the first *Captain America*," says Feige. "We want to take it to new places, we've got new characters that will show how big we're swinging on this. And we have a Hulk."

Yes, Mark Ruffalo's big green guy (and Bruce Banner) will be joining Chris Hemsworth's God Of Thunder to punch things and people, possibly including rumoured new cast member Cate Blanchett, very hard. The Hulk was last seen disappearing off the radar in a Quinjet at the end of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, and there's been much speculation about where he may have ended up. Asgard seems, somehow, to be the answer. "The film will take place within the cosmos primarily," confirms Feige, "which is to say, frankly, very little Earth."

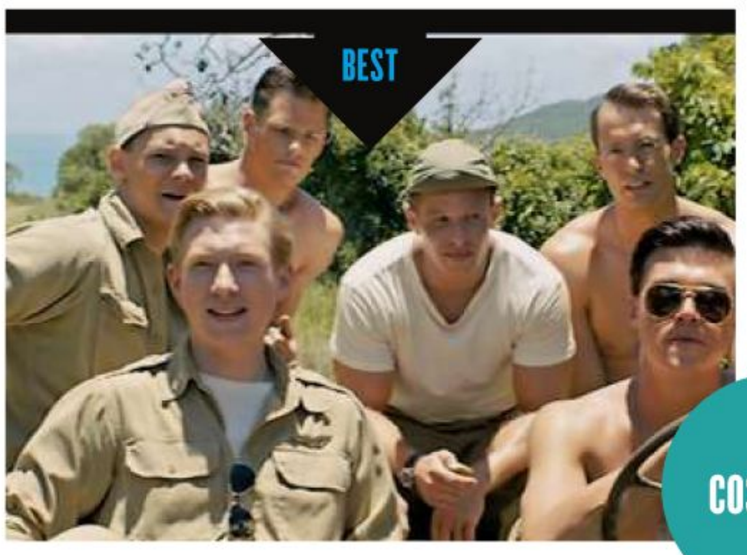
## Black Panther (FEBRUARY 9, 2018)

The prince of fictional African country Wakanda (which was introduced in *Age Of Ultron*), T'Challa is super-smart, super-athletic and clad in a virtually indestructible body armour. He's also breaking ground as the first black superhero to get a solo outing in the MCU (*Blade* wasn't part of the MCU, while *Luke Cage* will debut on Netflix next year). "This one is important," says Feige, "because not only do you get an unbelievable lead character, but you also get all of Wakanda which is a whole new setting and culture to explore." Feige confirms that the film, which will be the last Marvel movie before the Avengers return, will boast a "primarily African-American cast", while *Creed*'s Ryan Coogler is reportedly in negotiations to direct (Coogler declined to comment). As for the film itself, "It's a big geo-political action adventure that focuses on the family and royal struggle of T'Challa in Wakanda, and what it means to be a king. T'Challa's story is very important to us as it links to the next Avengers films, which is why we brought it forward." **CHRIS HEWITT**

# BEST OF TIMES/WORST OF TIMES

## DOMHNALL GLEESON

### ON BEING HEAT-AVERSE, WALKING OUT OF AUDITIONS AND GETTING COMPLIMENTED BY ANGELINA JOLIE PITT







**COSTUME**

"Walking on set in our US Air Force uniforms on *Unbroken*, because we'd lost all that weight earlier and had been so grizzled, Angelina Jolie [Pitt] said, 'Oh my God, you're all so handsome.' I've never felt so impressive as I did at that moment!"

"I was very cranky on the beach in one of the scenes in *About Time* because it was absolutely roasting and I had to dress like it was winter. I'm really good in the cold and horrible in the heat. I remember being very annoyed about that."

**PIECE OF DIRECTION**

**"On *True Grit* I got stuck doing something and Joel Coen just told me to change the rhythm. It changed the whole scene. Short and concise is more likely to make an impression."**





**"Not the worst, but on my first day on *Harry Potter*, David Yates said, 'Why don't you put that cup on the table while you're talking,' which makes sense, but it became the most complicated thing in my mind."**

**AUDITION**

"My audition for *Anna Karenina* made me a better actor. It was a five-hour intense experience and Joe (*Wright*) was so specific with me about how to think about love and how to work with a camera. He said, 'Just because you feel it doesn't mean I can see it.'"

"I walked out of an audition in Dublin once because I felt the director, producer and casting director were appallingly behaved. They weren't willing to accept that you can get nervous. They were just, 'Do it and get out,' so I said, 'How about I just get out?'"

**LOCATION**

**"The house in *Ex Machina* (*the Juvet Landscape Hotel in Norway*) was pretty stunning, as was the Russian shoot of *Anna Karenina*. Petrozavodsk was otherworldly."**





**"In terms of being muddy and horrible, *The Revenant* takes some beating. There were so many days where we'd need to be in and out of the water all day. It was tough."**

**MOMENT**

"I did a play called *The Walworth Farce* with my father (*Brendan*) and my brother (*Brian*). Taking a bow with them at the end of the last night, in the Dublin theatre I'd always wanted to be in (*the Olympia*), was the best moment in my career."

"On the last day on *Unbroken*, I was at my lowest weight and I'd been on dehydration protocol for four or five days. Having to be active and starving is not great." **PDS**



***THE REVENANT* IS OUT ON JANUARY 15.**

## THINGS WE'VE LEARNED



**Michael Fassbender and Ian McKellen have the same hand size. They're identical hand twins! They're gonna be millionaires!**



***The Hateful Eight*'s script supervisor is called Martin 'The Cobra' Kitrosser. This is not what he looks like in real life.**



**Peter Mullan is okay with *Empire*'s karaoke version of The Proclaimers' *500 Miles*, which consists of us chanting his name.**



**Voorhees a jolly good fellow! Jon Bernthal is a big fan of the *Friday The 13th* movies. His favourite is *Part II*.**

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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

# COP KILLERS

## INSIDE THE ALL-STAR GRITTY CRIME THRILLER, *TRIPLE 9*

FEW THINGS ARE more thrilling in cinema than a brilliant ensemble cast all working at the top of their game. Which makes John Hillcoat's cop thriller *Triple 9* such an attractive prospect, with the likes of Casey Affleck, Kate Winslet, Aaron Paul, Norman Reedus, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Woody Harrelson and Anthony Mackie going toe-to-toe in a tense game of cops, robbers and cops-who-*are*-robbers.

Today, on the north side of Atlanta, *Empire* is watching one member of that cast, Anthony Mackie as corrupt cop Marcus, move warily through the shadows of a derelict building, weapon drawn and at the ready. There's tension in the air, and not for nothing. For it's here, in this grim edifice, that Mackie will hope to contrive the shooting of a fellow Atlanta Police Department detective, an act that will trigger a 'triple nine'. Over here, that number is reserved for the emergency services. Turns out American police parlance is not that different.

"Triple nine is the code for 'officer down'," explains Mackie between set-ups. "When there's a nine-nine-nine," adds Aaron Paul, who plays Gabe, a fellow member of Mackie's crew, "everyone wants a piece of it. Everyone wants to catch a cop killer."

The idea behind Mackie's intended copricide is to bring the city's police swarming to the spot, thus allowing his crew to pull off a heist across town. That crew is led by Chiwetel Ejiofor's Michael, who's in debt to the Russian Mafia (in the guise of Kate Winslet's ruthless matriarch) and needs cash quicker than a Dragons' Den contestant. It's a surprisingly high-concept piece for Hillcoat, a filmmaker renowned for brutal character pieces like *The Road* and *The Proposition* rather than Hollywood-style police actioners. "I'd call it an epic crime drama," says the Australian director, "because it encompasses everything from the people at the very top to the street gangs at the bottom."

The intention, it's clear, is less the backdrop to an ingenious heist



**Below:** John Hillcoat, director of *Triple 9*.




movie and more the integral fabric of a film that aims to have all the ambitious scope of Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah* or Sidney Lumet's underrated masterpiece *Prince Of The City*. "I admire films that really capture that world," says Hillcoat, "like *GoodFellas*, which is revered above *The Godfather* by Mafioso guys." All good omens, then, if you like your crime movies richly detailed, morally complex and bloody as a blue steak. "We're not shying away from the horror of violence," confirms Hillcoat. This won't come as a surprise to anyone who saw Hillcoat's *The Proposition*, in which so much punishment was meted out to Guy Pearce that the UN came close to intervening. "It's not as dark as you might think," says Mackie. "John has a knack of bringing comedy into the most intense situations." Paul, his face a picture of fake bruises and cuts, shakes his head. "It's dark," he smiles. "Very, *very* dark." **SIMON BRAUND**

**1** Kate Winslet's Irina Vlaslov.
**2** Chiwetel Ejiofor's tortured thief, Michael.
**3** Woody Harrelson as Jeffrey, a cop chasing down Michael's crew.
**4** Casey Affleck's Chris — a good cop?
**5** Aaron Paul as the impulsive Gabe.
**6** Anthony Mackie's Marcus.

***TRIPLE 9* IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 19.**

# EMPIRE'S INCREDIBLE SUPERHERO CAST QUIZ!

**CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE NON-SUPERHERO FILM FROM ITS CAST OF HEROES?**



→ This month's *Spotlight* stars Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton, John Slattery and Liev Schreiber. But it also stars the Hulk, Batman, Tony Stark's dad and Sabretooth. We've applied this formula to other movies — can you guess which they are?


SPIDER-MAN + IRON MAN + ANT-MAN =


PROFESSOR X + MAYA HANSEN + DOCTOR STRANGE + HOWARD STARK =

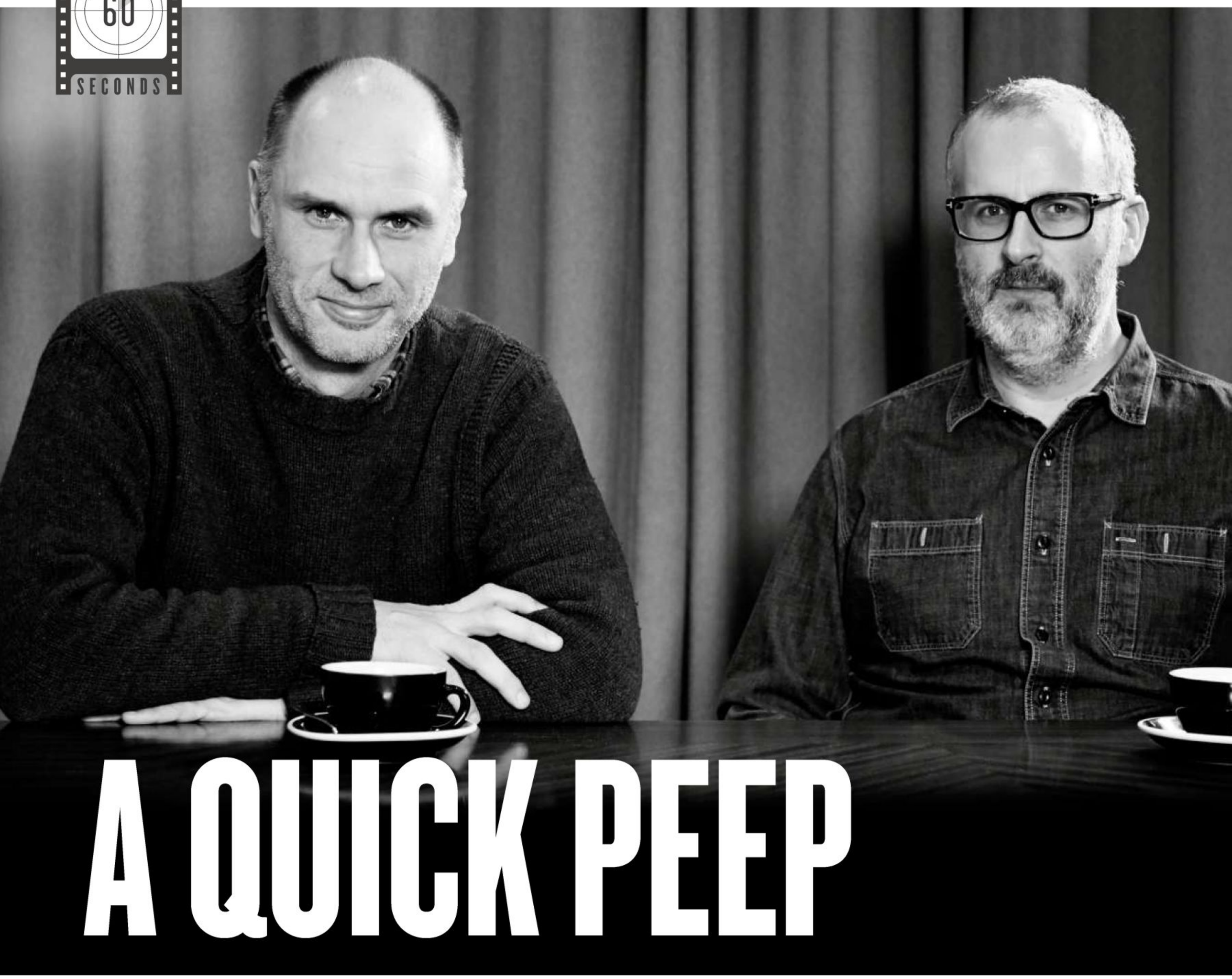

BATMAN + HAWKEYE + MYSTIQUE + ROCKET RACCOON + LOIS LANE =


BATMAN + GWEN STACY + THE HULK =


BATMAN + WOLVERINE + BLACK WIDOW + MAYA HANSEN + ALFRED =

**ANSWERS 1.** *Wonder Boys* **2.** *Starter For 10* **3.** *American Hustle* **4.** *Birdman* **5.** *The Prestige*

JAMESON EMPIRE DONE IN 60 SECONDS



# A QUICK PEEP

## ENTERING DONE IN 60 SECONDS? LEARN FROM *PEEP SHOW*'S SAM BAIN AND JESSE ARMSTRONG

PHOTOGRAPHY: **MARCO VITTUR**

THE DEADLINE TO take part in this year's Jameson Empire Done In 60 Seconds — the short film contest that challenges you to remake any film you like in just one minute — is very nearly upon us. So, with just a couple of weeks to go, we thought we'd recruit two screenwriters to give you a bit of last-minute inspiration.

But we didn't recruit any old screenwriters — we asked Sam Bain and Jesse Armstrong, the co-writers of *Babylon*, *Four Lions* and the seminal sitcom *Peep Show*, which ended its nine-series run in December. And we didn't do just any old interview — for the first time ever we embraced new-fangled technology by conducting a very funny and frank live Q&A on Periscope. Look at us, with our mobile phones and our internet connection.

**How did you go about planning the final series? How did you land the plane, so to speak?**
**Bain:** We didn't want the wheels to fall

**Clockwise from above:** Jesse Armstrong and Sam Bain; Armstrong in the frame — thirsty work; *Peep Show*'s Robert Webb and David Mitchell.







off and it to be a fiery ball of death and disaster. We wanted it to be a good series, mainly. We wanted it to feel like *Peep Show*. We didn't want Mark (*David Mitchell*) or Jeremy (*Robert Webb*) to win the lottery, or go to Spain. We wanted to do a good, solid, fun, high-quality series and not change too much.
**Armstrong:** Which is the great benefit and challenge of all sitcom writing. When you tune into a new episode of whatever it is, *Seinfeld, Friends, Detectorists,* you want it to be the same but agreeably different. That's the challenge we always faced.

**How did you get into writing?**
**Armstrong:** We did some writing on a creative writing course, which was prose writing. We knew each other through writing at university, and then a few years later Sam had had some success and written screenplays.
**Bain:** I wouldn't call it success.
**Armstrong:** But you'd done some stuff in that area, whereas I was totally outside that world. We started knocking scripts back to each other slowly.
**Bain:** You were working as a waitress in a cocktail bar when I met you.
**Armstrong:** That much is true. Sam had written stuff and I was impressed. I thought, "I'll try to jump onto his bandwagon until he pushes me off."
**Bain:** There's a lot of space in the back.

**But you've never written a short film together...**
**Bain:** No. Jesse has written and directed two very good short films. Certainly, if you're an aspiring director, it's a good start. I'd say it's a roundabout route to getting into writing — if you're hiring writers, like we do on *Fresh Meat*, you wouldn't look at a short film script too closely. If you're serious about being just a writer, like we are, I'd say tackle the half hour, the hour, the feature because that will prove you can sustain a story.
**Armstrong:** What's so good about your competition is that it's nice to have the story laid out. The majority of short films, if they fail, it's because the director wants to make something and the idea comes second to the desire to make the thing. This is a great starting point — you can either subvert the genre of the film you're remaking, or you can stick with it and do it straight or playfully. It's great to have that dialogue that you can play with. They're a tough write, short films.

**How tough?**
**Bain:** In a way, the shorter the script, the harder it is. You have to get your story in such a concise form. In this competition, you're borrowing someone else's story, but brevity is everything when you're making a short film. Can you quote me on that? Brevity is everything.

**What film would you make?**
**Bain:** You could do *Shoah*, or you could do the *Star Wars* prequels and just take out the stuff that doesn't work.
**Armstrong:** Genre subversion is the way to go. I'd pick something... I'd probably do *Topsy-Turvy* by Mike Leigh. I'd get a lot of costumes in and have a lot of fun over a minute. CH

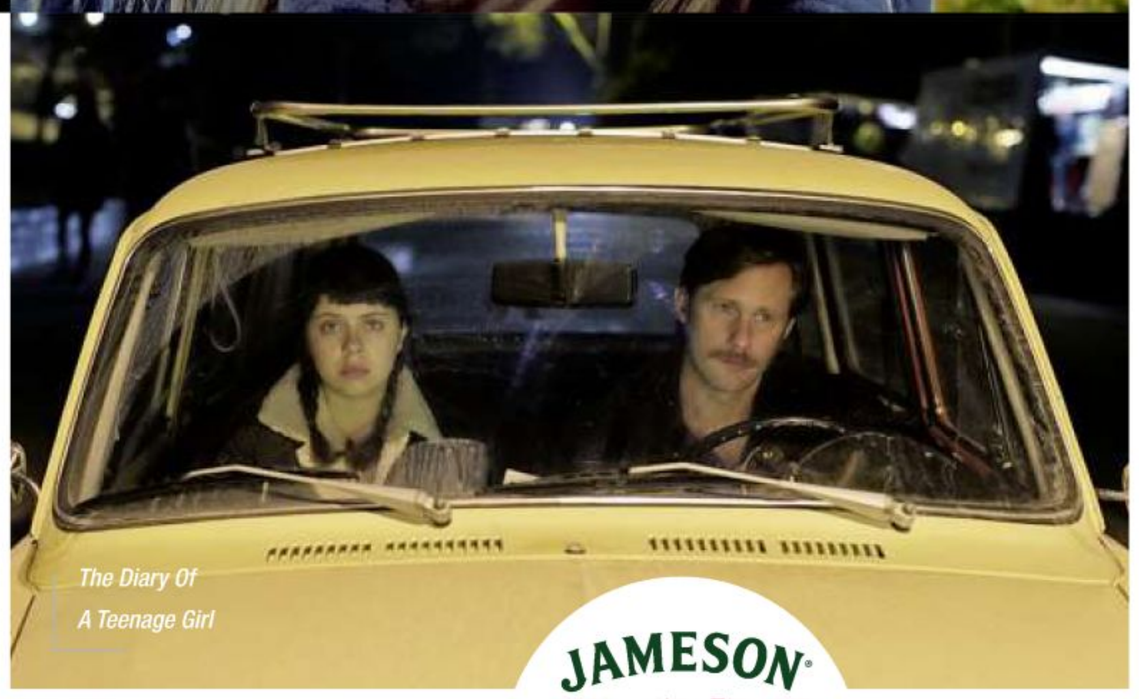
**TO HEAR MORE FROM BAIN AND ARMSTRONG ON *PEEP SHOW*'S FINAL EPISODES, CHECK OUT OUR SPOILER SPECIAL PODCAST ON WWW.EMPIREONLINE.COM.**

## ENTER NOW!

To take part in this year's Jameson Empire Done In 60 Seconds competition, go to www.jamesonempirediss.com. Countries eligible for entry are the United Kingdom, Ireland, Bulgaria and Poland.


Whiplash


It Follows


The Diary Of A Teenage Girl

JAMESON® EMPIRE AWARDS 2016

# YEAR OF THE UNDERDOG

**WILL THIS YEAR'S JAMESON EMPIRE AWARDS SPRING SOME SURPRISES?**

WHEN IT COMES TO voting for the Jameson Empire Awards 2016, it's easy to have your head turned by the blockbusters. *Star Wars. Mad Max. Avengers. Jurassic World. Spectre.*

This year, though, with the Awards expanding in all kinds of exciting ways, the race has never been more open. So it's time for a reminder of some of the smaller, quieter but undeniably brilliant films you may have overlooked.

Take Best British Film, for example, where Andrew Haigh's aching *45 Years* or the gonzo treat that was *Kingsman: The Secret Service* could mount a challenge to 007. Or Best Comedy, where the gentle but hilarious *SuperBob* and pun-tastic Shakespeare origin tale *Bill* could duke it out with Melissa McCarthy's *Spy*.

It's been a cracking year for Horror, with Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* potentially vying with *It Follows*, Corin Hardy's creepy *The Hallow* and the unique *A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night*.

In fact, 2015 was a great year for "Girls" — consider also the winning quirk of *Me And Earl And The Dying Girl* and the deadpan drama of *The Diary Of A Teenage Girl*, both of which could surprise in the Acting/Newcomer categories.

And if you're after films that could gatecrash the Best Film party, what about *Whiplash*, *The Martian* and *Terminator Genisys*? Well, maybe not the last one.

To vote for the Jameson Empire Awards 2016, go to **www.empireonline.com/awards**. Voting ends on February 12, 2016, with the ceremony itself taking place on March 20, 2016.

JAMESON IRISH WHISKEY · Absolute Radio · CORINTHIA HOTEL · The Hollywood Reporter

JAMESON® EMPIRE AWARDS 2016

## THE CATEGORIES

BEST FILM

BEST MALE NEWCOMER

BEST FEMALE NEWCOMER

BEST SCI-FI/FANTASY

BEST HORROR

BEST COMEDY
PRESENTED BY ABSOLUTE RADIO

BEST BRITISH FILM

JAMESON BEST ACTOR

BEST ACTRESS

BEST DIRECTOR

BEST SCREENPLAY

BEST ANIMATED FILM

BEST THRILLER
PRESENTED BY CORINTHIA HOTEL LONDON

BEST DOCUMENTARY

BEST SOUNDTRACK

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

BEST MAKE-UP AND HAIRSTYLING

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

BEST SHORT FILM
PRESENTED BY JAMESON IRISH WHISKEY

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

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EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

# A FRESH HUNGER

**CHLOË GRACE MORETZ IS HOLLYWOOD'S LATEST Y.A. HEROINE IN *THE 5TH WAVE***

KATNISS EVERDEEN may have fired her last arrow in anger, but Hollywood's hunger for the new *Hunger Games* has not abated (as indicated by news that Lionsgate may now be in the *Hunger Games* prequels business). The latest contender for the Y.A. crown is *The 5th Wave* — and with Jennifer Lawrence moving on to more adult fare, there's also room for a new heroine. Step forward, Chloë Grace Moretz.

In a sense, it's a surprise that Moretz hasn't appeared in one of the many Y.A. sci-fi fantasies that sprang up in the immediate wake of *The Hunger Games*' success. She's the right age (18), she's bankable and her time as Hit-Girl in the *Kick-Ass* movies showed she can handle herself in a dust-up. As it turns out, she had flirted with at least one or two of them.

"A lot of the major series I went up for," she says, "or I got them and turned them down. The reason is I never felt they had a real, true human basis. What makes the character an actual human and not some action girl running round with pretty hair? Our movie is very real, even when there's aliens involved."

Ah yes, aliens. In Brit J Blakeson's adaptation of Rick Yancey's novel, an alien invasion wipes out virtually the entire human population in a series of attack waves, including an EMP, giant tsunamis and a plague. And Moretz' high-schooler, Cassie, is caught in the middle, trying to stay alive as the evil ETs unleash their deadliest wave yet.

As is the case with most Y.A. films, it's all very dark and dystopian — there's a lot of hunger, but not many games. "It's fun," insists Moretz. "There's action, and we get a good kiss in. An end-of-the-world kiss." Good to know. **HELEN O'HARA**

***THE 5TH WAVE* IS OUT ON JANUARY 22.**

**Above:** Chloë Grace Moretz as Cassie. **Right:** Moretz with director J Blakeson (centre) and Alex Roe as Evan Walker.





# THE SEVEN FACES OF SUNDANCE

**THE UTAH-BASED FILM FEST IS ALL ABOUT BREAKOUTS. HERE ARE OUR PREDICTIONS FOR THIS YEAR**

## LILY-ROSE DEPP AND HARLEY QUINN SMITH

The daughters of Johnny Depp and Kevin Smith play besties battling evil in Smith's comedy, *Yoga Hosers*.



## ASIF KAPADIA

After *Amy*, the British director returns to fiction with *Ali And Nino*, a period piece starring Adam Bakri and Maria Valverde as a Muslim and a Christian who fall in love against the backdrop of World War I.



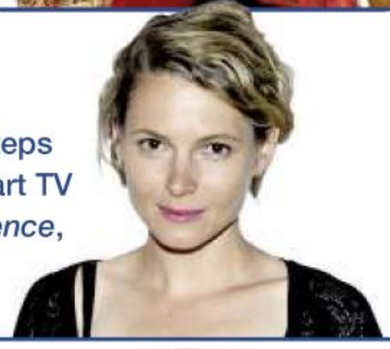
## SONITA ALIZADEH

This teenage Afghani rapper, the subject of Rokhsareh Ghaemmaghami's film *Sonita*, could follow 'Sugar Man' Sixto Rodriguez with her political rhymes about female oppression in her homeland.



## AMY SEIMETZ

The female lead in Shane Carruth's *Upstream Color* steps behind the camera for 13-part TV series *The Girlfriend Experience*, based on the 2009 Steven Soderbergh movie.



## DANIEL RADCLIFFE

He's dead. At least, he is in *Swiss Army Man*, an indie "feel-good" movie in which he plays a dead body that convinces a suicidal man (Paul Dano) that life is worth living.



## KENNETH LONERGAN

He won Sundance 16 years ago with *You Can Count On Me*, and has only made the troubled *Margaret* since. Might family drama *Manchester By The Sea* be a return to glory? DW



**FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!**

# LIAM NEESON LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE...

THE PAST FEW years may have seen an endless stream of gruff-voiced action heroes in black leather jackets, but never let it be said that Liam Neeson doesn't have range. This is a man who, after all, has played a Jedi Knight, a Greek god and a talking lion. But for his next role, he's really branching out... by playing a tree.

Not just any tree, mind. In Juan Antonio Bayona's *A Monster Calls*, based on the heartrending book by Patrick Ness, 13 year-old Connor (newcomer Lewis MacDougall) is at the darkest time of his young life: shunned at school, faced with a sick mother (Felicity Jones) and a distant grandmother (Sigourney Weaver). At that moment, enter Neeson as a millennia-old giant tree who comes to Connor with advice. "The tree is a very noble character," says Bayona. "Liam was perfect. His voice was perfect, he has the right age, the right body."

The tree you see here isn't Neeson in a suit, sadly. The monster will be a combination of practical effects and CG, with Neeson mocapping for the first time. "For two or three days we just spent time trying to get him used to the pyjamas," laughs the Spanish director. "It was challenging — we are talking about a creature 12 metres tall, moving in narrow spaces. 'Sorry, Liam, but your foot is now off the set! You're standing on a house!'"

A troubled youth is visited by a wise old mentor, learns valuable life lessons, and everything's hunky-dory. That would be the Hollywoodised version of this story. Bayona is aiming for something more complex. "For me, it's about a kid trying to find his place in the world and how he needs to break things to find that place," says Bayona. And then there's Neeson — or, if you will, Treeson. His monster may be noble, but his relationship with Connor is much more caustic. The Big Unfriendly Giant, anyone? **CHRIS HEWITT**

***A MONSTER CALLS* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 21.**

**NO, WE MEAN THE TREE.**



## OCEAN'S ELMLEVEN

**BEHOLD THE GREATEST MOVIE TREES**

### TREEBEARD
**The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers**
An ancient tree with John Rhys-Davies' voice.
**KEY MOMENT:** When he twigs out and stomps on Isengard.

### GROOT
**Guardians Of The Galaxy**
He is Groot.
**KEY MOMENT:** Sacrificing himself for the team. Not a dry leaf in the house.

### FIG TREE
**Pan's Labyrinth**
The entrance to Guillermo del Toro's fantasy world.
**KEY MOMENT:** Ofelia meets a giant toad.

### HOMETREE
**Avatar**
The Na'vi's home. A tree so big even Swampy couldn't hug it.
**KEY MOMENT:** It gets blown up and toppled. Timber!

### THE WHOMPING WILLOW
**Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets**
An angry tree in the grounds of Hogwarts.
**KEY MOMENT:** Beating the crap out of a Ford Anglia, like a wooden Jeremy Clarkson.

### TREE DEMON
**Evil Dead II**
The personification of Kandarian evil. Lovely.
**KEY MOMENT:** Getting chainsawed in its wooden face by Bruce Campbell.

### FIGHTING TREE
**The Wizard Of Oz**
Festooned with lovely apples. Just don't try to pick any of them.
**KEY MOMENT:** Slapping Dorothy and trying to punch the Scarecrow.

### EVIL TREE
**Poltergeist**
Well, if you will plant evil acorns…
**KEY MOMENT:** Smashing through a bedroom window to try and get to children. Goodbye, sleep.

### AGENT 13
**Get Smart**
It's not a tree. It's Bill Murray disguised as a tree. Which is better.
**KEY MOMENT:** The big reveal of Murray's bemused kisser.

### THE MAGIC TREE
**The Empire Strikes Back**
The entrance to the Dark Side Cave. Dagobah is a fun place.
**KEY MOMENT:** Luke enters it. Steady now.

### THE TREE OF LIFE
**The Tree Of Life**
It's the tree of life.
**KEY MOMENT:** Being all tree of lifey.



# HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

## Stan Lee

**THE MARVEL MAESTRO'S FAVOURITE SUPERHERO? MILK-MAN**

PORTRAIT **JEFF VESPA**

**What is the worst thing you have ever put in your mouth?** Castor oil. My wife once gave it to me, thinking it was something else. I almost divorced her, but I decided I'd give her another chance.

**Can you play a musical instrument?** I used to play an ocarina, or as they sometimes call it, a sweet potato, but that was years ago. The other day I bought a new one thinking I would try it again and I couldn't play a note. I seem to have lost that great musical talent I once had.

**There is a zombie apocalypse. What do you do and where do you hide out?** I wouldn't go anywhere; I would stay where I was. Because I think this whole zombie thing is wrong. You see, it seems to me that if somebody was dead, and then came back to life, that person wouldn't want to hurt anybody, he would be so happy! "Hey, look at me! I'm alive! Let's party!" So I would hang around and wait for the next party.

**What is your favourite animal?** It's got to be a dog. My wife and I have had dogs all our lives, we've had Shepherds, and Dobermans and now we live in a place where it isn't as good to have big dogs, so we have little Chihuahuas and a French Bulldog.

**How much is a pint of milk?** Boy, you could tell me anything. I haven't gone shopping in years. My wife does all of that, or our housekeeper does it, and you could tell me a pint of milk is a dollar or ten dollars and I wouldn't know.

**Have you ever knowingly broken the law?** Yes. In Central Park they used to have a bridal path where you could ride a horse, but you weren't allowed to gallop in the park. And one day, I decided I would gallop no matter what. The next thing I knew, a mounted policeman appeared from out of nowhere. I was young then, and he said, "Hey, son, you wanna slow down?" I shouted that the horse was running away with me. When we reached the start of the path again I stopped the horse and he complimented me for being brave. I'm the only person who ever broke the law and was complimented for it!

**What is your favourite word in the English language?** Joanie. It's my wife's name.

**Have you ever used your celebrity to get something for free?** No. I guess I don't have that much celebrity!

**Which film have you seen more than any other?** I used to see, whenever it was playing and there was a revival, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* with Leslie Howard. That was the first superhero I had ever seen, and I just thought it was a wonderful movie.

**Who was your first movie crush?** Maybe Judy Garland when I was very young!

**Have you ever had your own dialogue quoted back to you on the street?** Not really. My dialogue is such that nobody else can say it as wonderfully as I do, so nobody ever makes that attempt.

**What one thing do you do better than anyone else you know?** Give interviews. I am a wonderful interviewee! JAMES WHITE

***LUCKY MAN*, BASED ON AN IDEA BY LEE, WILL BE ON SKY 1 NEXT YEAR.**

### DID YOU KNOW?

- He served in the US Army, writing scripts for training films.
- Lee once wrote two scripts for French auteur Alain Resnais.
- He officiated the "wedding" of Spider-Man and Mary Jane Watson in 1987.




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# FILM GUIDE

UNMISSABLE ★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ GOOD ★★★ POOR ★★ TRAGIC ★

THE EMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE



## The Revenant

★★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 15** / CERT. **15** / **156 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Alejandro González Iñárritu
**CAST** Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Will Poulter, Lukas Haas, Domhnall Gleeson, Grace Dove Syme, Paul Anderson

**PLOT** In 1823, a fur-trapping expedition in the American Midwest is attacked by a Native American tribe. Their quest to reach safety is complicated by a bear attack that leaves tracker Hugh Glass (DiCaprio) close to death.

REVENGE, GOES the old Klingon proverb, is a dish best served cold. Which is good news for *The Revenant*, the new film by Mexican boundary-pusher Alejandro González Iñárritu, because few tales of vengeance have ever looked quite so butt-clenchingly chilly. It's become the stuff of legend, a nine-month shoot in the wilds of Alberta and Argentina. But Iñárritu has come out the other side with an astonishing sensory experience, one that plunges the viewer into a sub-zero hell that often looks like heaven. It's likely to both



storm the Academy Awards and play well on Kronos.

After sending up Hollywood with *Birdman*, Iñárritu has found inspiration in an even less civilised collective: the frontiersmen of the 1820s. As recounted in Michael Punke's source novel, a fur-trading venture up the Missouri River attracted a mixture of upright men like Andrew Henry (Domhnall Gleeson), young tenderfeet like Jim Bridger (Will Poulter) and black-hearted killers like John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy). But the focal point of the story is Leonardo DiCaprio's Hugh Glass. The original Bear Grylls — and almost certainly history's toughest Hugh — he was an expert tracker who achieved folk-hero status by surviving an ursine assault, then clawing his way out of the wilderness to hunt down those who betrayed him. Details about his life are hazy, which is all the better for allowing Iñárritu and star Leonardo DiCaprio to turn the grizzly man into a mythic force of nature.

Leonardo DiCaprio's imperilled frontiersman Hugh Glass: not best pleased at how things are panning out.

The odds are stacked against him. In two blistering early set-pieces, the sheer brutality that mountain men faced back then is made clear. They are also a chance for ace cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki to show he's not slacking after winning consecutive Oscars for *Gravity* and *Birdman*.

The movie opens with a moment of serene beauty, gliding Terrence Malick-like through a waterlogged forest as Glass and his son (Forrest Goodluck) hunt elk, just outside camp. Then Arikara warriors burst out of the foliage, cueing an eruption of distinctly non-Terrence Malick-like carnage. It's a mesmerising, violent piece of action choreography, as Iñárritu's camera (the brand-new 6.5k ARRI ALEXA 65, in case you were wondering) glides through the chaos. One jaw-droppingly limber shot pursues a character until he's dispatched, then switches to the killer until he's slain too, and so on, mounting and dismounting a horse and even plunging into water to capture a drowning. It would look like showing off if it weren't so damn effective.



Equally bravura is the bear attack. In 1971's *Man Of The Wilderness*, an equally loose take on the Hugh Glass legend that renames him Zachary Bass, Richard Harris is mauled by an off-camera beast. Technology in 2015 makes possible a far more intense sequence, with the enraged CG "grizz" coming off like a cross between Uncle Pastuzo and the demon Pazuzu. Though the visual effects are a little jarring in a movie that's otherwise largely practical, nature, red in tooth and claw, has rarely been captured like this on screen. It's a devastating bout of savagery that leaves Glass with bones broken and skin rent open in awful ways.

And so begins what could be termed The Passion Of The Leo. The supporting cast is uniformly terrific, particularly Poulter, looking on the verge of tears at all times, and Hardy, sometimes hitting Bane levels of mumbledom but emanating menace as the half-scalped villain of the piece. But for large swathes of the film it's DiCaprio on his own, and if this doesn't land him that Oscar at last, he may have to sign up for a Mother Teresa biopic.

Flinging himself into every harsh scenario as if atoning for all that *Wolf Of Wall Street* debauchery, DiCaprio is hypnotically good, whether scraping marrow out of a frozen bone, going full Gollum on a fish, or (in a moment that will surely become known as The Tauntaun Bit) keeping himself warm with the aid of a horse. He has maybe a dozen lines of dialogue, most of which are rasped through a torn throat, but you root for him with all your heart.

DiCaprio's raw performance helps elevate what could have been just another man-versus-nature drama, *The Edge* with furry hats, into a powerful ode to resilience. But this is Iñárritu's show. Some directors might have been tempted to follow an Oscar win by making a cushy comedy in the Bahamas — but the driven Iñárritu pushed himself and his crew to the limits against the elements. He defied conventional wisdom by shooting with natural light only, and in chronological order, and has emerged with something we have never seen before.

The imagery is sublime, ancient landscapes straight out of an Albert Bierstadt painting and weird wastelands pulled from Glass' subconscious. The score, by Ryuichi Sakamoto and Alva Noto, is doomy and primal. And those eccentric grace notes that buoyed up *Birdman* are present too: at one point a character's ragged breath fogs up the screen. It took a crazed drive equal to Glass' own to put together this mad feat of a film. At least nobody got mauled by a bear along the way.

**NICK DE SEMLYEN**



**Top:** Glass' son Hawk (Forrest Goodluck), wading into the drama. **Above:** Tom Hardy's John Fitzgerald, the Bane of Glass' existence.

**VERDICT** Iñárritu turns a creaky bit of frontier mythology into a gruelling, exquisite, mystical odyssey of survival that will make you want to cancel that camping trip.

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# Joy

★★★

OUT **JANUARY 1** / CERT. **12A** / **124 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** David O. Russell
**CAST** Jennifer Lawrence, Robert De Niro, Bradley Cooper, Virginia Madsen

**PLOT** As a child, Joy Mangano (Isabella Crovetti-Cramp) wants to be an inventor. Fast-forward a decade and the adult Joy (Lawrence) pins all those hopes on her latest gizmo, a self-wringing mop.

GEORGE BUSH SR. once observed that American families should be less like *The Simpsons* and more like *The Waltons*. God knows what he would make of the Manganos, a small-town clan in a more-or-less permanent state of chaos, with a divorced mum (Virginia Madsen) glued to soap operas, her daughter's ex-husband (Édgar Ramírez) living in the basement and a volatile dad (Robert De Niro) at the front door looking for a sofa to crash on. And even the Simpsons didn't have an outdoor shooting range just round the corner.

The lodestar in this head-spinning universe — Lisa in a world of Homers — is Jennifer Lawrence's Joy Mangano, the heart of a story that was forged from real-life by *Bridesmaids* writer Annie Mumolo and reshaped by David O. Russell into an offbeat and half-successful skew on the American dream. We meet Joy as a ceaselessly imaginative child, then pick up with her, three kids later and still determined to invent and create, with Lawrence stepping into her harried shoes.

As the opening credits establish, this kinda-biopic is "inspired by the stories of daring women", and Lawrence's name increasingly belongs on any such list. Even in an ensemble of this calibre, she holds the screen as the gutsy entrepreneur-in-the-making, irrepressible in the face of constant discouragement and, at one point, utterly bereft as the threat of financial doom begins to suffocate. It's a performance simmering with controlled passion, and a likely awards favourite.

Nowadays, of course, Joy would just pitch up on *Dragons' Den* and Duncan Bannatyne would be in for 30 per cent, but here her revolutionary cleaner-upper leads her to QVC, a burgeoning home-shopping channel run by Bradley Cooper's hard-but-fair businessman. Easily the most enjoyable chapter in a jerkily episodic tale, Joy's baptism into the art of TV-shilling is both horribly awkward and hugely watchable. How can she sell herself in a live television environment where power-dressing prevails? And will her mop shift 50,000 units before all is lost? It's a race against time, only with Joan Rivers (played by her daughter, Melissa) on the stopwatch.

> Maybe the puce feature wall had been a mistake.

Cooper drifts handsomely in and out, while kudos to Russell for again locating the keys to Robert De Niro and drawing an entertainingly gruff turn from him as Joy's doubting father. Virginia Madsen, sporting the year's uncoolest specs, pulls off a rare blend of ferociousness and passivity as her housebound mum.

Somehow, though, it feels less than the sum of its stellar parts. Occasional dips into surrealism — there are echoes of Buñuel and Lynch as Joy imagines her family stepping into her mum's favourite soap — make for an uncomfortable fit with such conventional material, while the film only half commits to its voiceover narration. There's plenty of story here, but Russell never quite nails down a consistent way of telling it. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

**VERDICT** Another dazzling Jennifer Lawrence performance anchors a blue-collar parable that boasts some inspired moments but never quite gels.

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# Star Wars: The Force Awakens

★★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **12A** / **135 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** J. J. Abrams
**CAST** Harrison Ford, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver, Oscar Isaac, Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill

**PLOT** Luke Skywalker (Hamill) has vanished, and both the Resistance and the sinister First Order are searching for him. Crack pilot Poe Dameron (Isaac) obtains a clue to his whereabouts, but when everything goes wrong, a droid called BB-8 becomes the centre of the search, along with scavenger Rey (Ridley) and stormtrooper deserter FN-2187 (Boyega), who have found the droid.

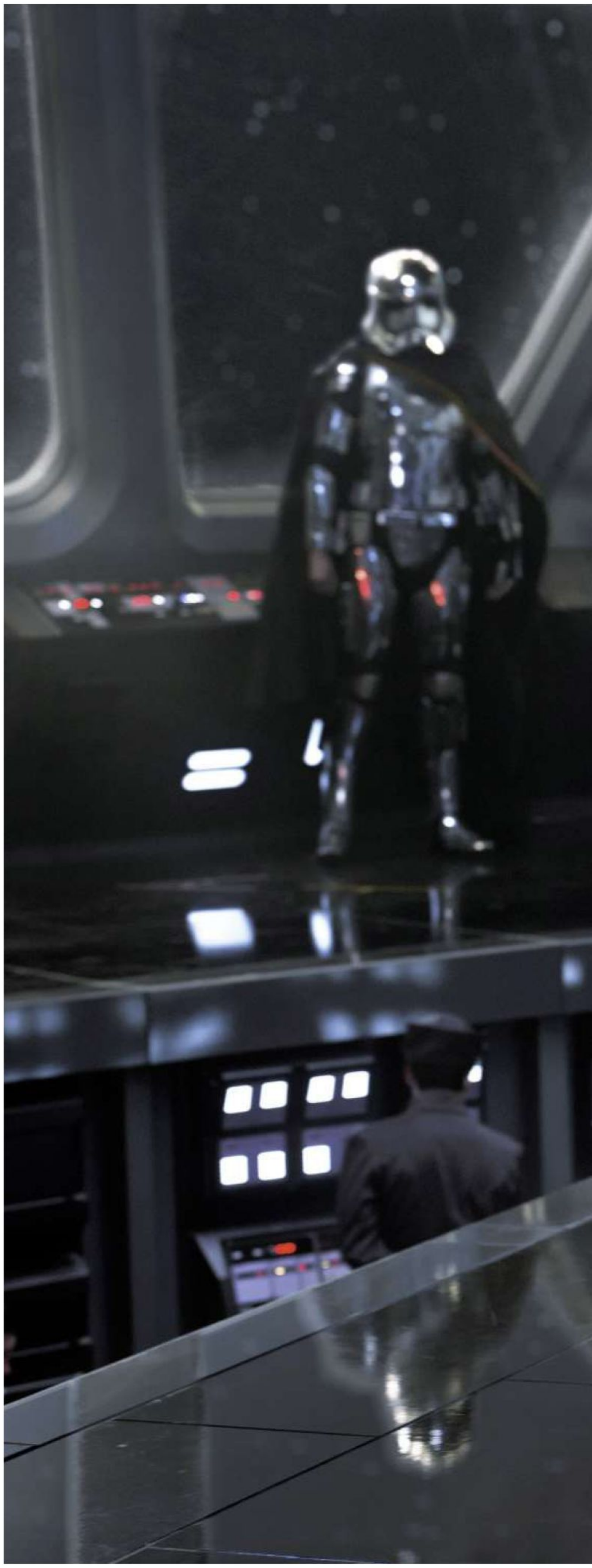
IF YOU WERE TO make a list of the essential ingredients of a *Star Wars* film, you would find almost all in J. J. Abrams' wake-up call to this sleeping giant of a franchise. From the biggest — dark versus light side, dogfights, mystical powers — to the smallest — mouse robots, turbo lasers, absurd alien Cantina music — this glories in reminding us what we all loved about this universe. By the end, it's given us a reason to be excited about *Star Wars*' future as well.

The story begins with Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac), "General Organa's most daring pilot", sent to recover a clue to the whereabouts of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) on the desert planet of Jakku. Luke is, at first, the MacGuffin of this movie, the lure that gets everyone else moving. But Poe's mission is interrupted by First Order forces led by Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and Poe is taken prisoner — though not before he hides the necessary information inside his BB-8 unit, which duly escapes into the desert. BB-8 soon meets scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley), stranded on the planet as an infant and still waiting for her parents to return for her.

Meanwhile, a stormtrooper involved in the attack where Poe was captured is having a crisis of conscience. FN-2187, soon rechristened Finn (John Boyega), sees an opportunity in this battered pilot and with his help hopes to escape the First Order Star Destroyer on which he serves. But when their ship crashes back on Jakku he's forced to work with Rey instead, while enemy forces close in on BB-8. Luckily there's a "garbage" old Corellian YT model freighter nearby that they can use to escape — and soon its old owner comes to check out its familiar flight signature...

It is unbelievably good to see Han (Harrison Ford) and Chewbacca (Peter Mayhew) back together again — and later rejoin Leia (Carrie Fisher), C-3PO (Anthony Daniels) and the rest. There's a sense of weight to those relationships that is impossible to fake because the audience is part of the love — to cite a rival franchise, it's the difference between the emotional heft of *The Wrath Of Khan* and the emotionless waft of *Star Trek Into Darkness*. Here too there's a sense of decades passed and battles lost and won, of old arguments half-healed and old love still simmering.

The new characters don't all get quite as much development as they should to match the existing titans. Finn is the most rounded, with Boyega retaining all the charisma he displayed in *Attack The Block* but upping his humour levels considerably. He's clearly battle-shocked in his first taste of combat, and even in armour his body-language howls his terror and moral uncertainty. His growing confidence in his own capability is a glory to behold. Rey, however, is ▷





Unlike Hux, Phasma and Ren would take no chances during the cold and flu season.



stuck in the goody two-shoes Luke role and underserved by a script that makes her tough but a little unfocused. She does grow during the adventure, maturing from childhood (look out for a homemade X-wing pilot doll in her home) towards a more powerful, more influential destiny. Poe has more fun than either, whooping with glee while executing some astonishing aerial moves and looking good doing it. Still, he's not hugely nuanced; he's basically just an awesome, awesome guy. Perhaps that's enough.

Against them there is Kylo Ren, the best villain that the franchise has ever produced. He's not just a worthy heir to Vader; he may be more interesting. Rangy to the point of being gangly, there's the sense of adolescence still clinging to him, his rages coming across as petulant rather than showing Vader's cold fury. This, you sense, is one messed-up kid — an impression reinforced by his struggle with the "seduction" of the light side. "The First Order arose from the dark side," says Max von Sydow's Lor San Tekka. "You did not." And yet Ren is casually formidable, freezing a blaster bolt with a wave of his hand and halting opposition with a thought. He has the most interesting arc in the film, even more so than Boyega, and while he will most decidedly *not* be a fan favourite, he is an astonishing bad guy.

Ren stands alongside Domhnall Gleeson's General Hux, a sneer given human form, and commands the ruthless Captain Phasma (Gwendoline Christie). We don't see a huge amount of Ren's leader and mentor, the immensely awful Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis), but it's clear that he is a bigger threat than the Emperor was, and carries a much bigger stick. As Tekka says early on, "Without the Jedi, there can be no balance in the Force" — and without Luke, there are no remaining Jedi. If Snoke is the universe's reaction to that, we're going to need a new Academy established quick-smart.

In the meantime there are battles to win and fancy flying to be done. You'll see the Millennium Falcon in action again, crash-landing and also crash-taking-off, which is a new one. For the bigger battles, Abrams largely resists the urge to amp up the speed of the X-wing/TIE Fighter dogfights as much as modern technology allows, and maintains a stately rush that the eye can still follow. His storytelling isn't always quite so clear: the balance of power between Republic, Resistance and First Order is left vague, and the First Order's aims are opaque even by the standards of evil megalomania.

Sometimes, too, the adherence to *Star Wars* past grates. Parts of the first half hour feel like a remix, from the plans hidden in a small, feisty droid to the rescue of a tortured but still witty prisoner from an evil authoritarian regime. It's all beautifully crafted, just a little too deferential to what has gone before. But then the new characters take shape and new elements emerge. By the end, this finds fresh ingredients to add to the *Star Wars* formula, strengthening and deepening it. The prequels this ain't. We can all breathe again. **HELEN O'HARA**



**Top:** Suddenly, Jar Jar Binks loomed into view. **Above:** Always remember: mirror, signal, manoeuvre.

**VERDICT** This is filmmaking on an enormous scale and it packs a planet-sized punch, launching a new generation of characters who — by the end — take a place next to Han, Leia and the rest. *Star Wars* is back, and this is just the beginning.


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# The Assassin

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 22** / CERT. **12A** / **106 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Hou Hsiao-Hsien
**CAST** Qi Shu, Fang-Yi Sheu, Chang Chen

**PLOT** Tang Dynasty, China. For political and personal reasons, assassin Nie Yinniang (Shu) is sent by her aunt Jiaxin (Sheu) to kill her cousin Tian Ji'an (Chang).

TAIWANESE director Hou Hsiao-Hsien (*The Puppetmaster, Dust In The Wind*) ventures into the wuxia genre of period martial-arts movie — which, in British terms, is a little like Terence Davies making a Western.

*The Assassin*, adapted from a ninth-century text about a legendary female martial artist, is beguiling yet baffling. It's steadily paced, with more long-held contemplative shots of natural beauty than bursts of impressive action, and an elastic, dream-like sense of passing time. It's mostly in old-fashioned Academy ratio, though the frame opens out for a few significant shots. Hou often stages and photographs key scenes in unusual, elliptical manners which are striking — a mass sword-battle in a copse observed from outside the woods — but also frankly make it tricky to follow the story.

The heart of the film is Nie Yinniang (Qi Shu), a black-clad princess raised by her aunt, a rebel nun, to become an unbeatable martial-arts master. In several sequences she dodges and twists when attacked by swordsmen, without even using her claw-like dagger, and bests apparently more ferocious and better-armed men. Her current target is her cousin, Tian Ji'an (Chang Chen), who was once promised to her in marriage but has taken another wife to secure an alliance between his province and the capital. For reasons that remain intriguingly unclear, Nie Yinniang takes a roundabout route to vengeance, prompting the involvement of a weird-looking master magician (who adds a touch of fantasy to the historical drama by sending a smoke ghost to kill Tian Ji'an) and a masked swordswoman (Yun Zhou) who is her mirror-image doppelgänger (and who actually is Tian Ji'an's wife).

Qi Shu is a ferocious presence, calm yet lethal, but Hou doesn't fetishise her deadliness. The underlying message of the film might be that sometimes it is crueller or more dangerous *not* to kill a miscreant. It might also be the case that the film is more taken by emotions, beauty and passing fancies than plot and character. **KIM NEWMAN**

She took the advice to adopt a more balanced approach a tad literally.

**VERDICT** This might send you Googling Tang Dynasty trivia to suss out the story, but even without clear understanding you'll be fascinated by its quiet, allusive beauty.



## By The Sea

★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **15** / **122 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Angelina Jolie Pitt
**CAST** Angelina Jolie Pitt, Brad Pitt

→ Jolie Pitt's third directorial outing reunites her with husband Pitt for the first time since they starred together in *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, though those expecting explosive action — or any action — should look away now. They are drunk writer Roland and ex-dancer-now-pill-popper Vanessa, a couple whose relationship teeters on the brink of breakdown. They seek distraction (and possible reconciliation) by spying on their honeymooning neighbours in a small French coastal town. The cause of their marital discord is withheld until the last act, which means we're treated to two hours of almost nothing save some laboured lying around from Jolie. It's pretty, but it's also pretty vacant. **TW**



## Daddy's Home

★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **12A** / **96 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Sean Anders
**CAST** Will Ferrell, Mark Wahlberg

→ Everything's dandy for Brad (Ferrell). Job at a smooth jazz station, loving wife, stepdad to two kids. Then in swaggers Dusty (Wahlberg), the biological father: a surly, super-hung silverback intent on reclaiming his offspring. Anders' emasculating dad-wars comedy lacks a killer set-piece, but still comes as a pleasant surprise. Reunited after *The Other Guys*, Ferrell and Wahlberg have formed an improbable, viable, very funny double act. Ferrell's the wuss, Wahlberg the bad-ass; hackneyed personas maybe, but the chemistry clicks like LEGO. If it all ends in cornball reconciliation, the dumb, fuzzy smile it leaves suggests it's well earned. **SC**

# Creed

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 15** / CERT. **12A** / **133 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Ryan Coogler
**CAST** Michael B. Jordan, Sylvester Stallone, Tessa Thompson, Tony Bellew, Phylicia Rashad

**PLOT** Adonis 'Donny' Johnson (Jordan) is the illegitimate son of Apollo Creed. Drawn to boxing like his late father, he heads to Philadelphia, where he enlists the services of a new trainer: Rocky Balboa (Stallone)...



THE BEST PUNCHES are the ones you don't see coming. Following the failure of the underrated *Rocky Balboa*, the *Rocky* series was on the canvas, the count nearing ten. *Creed* not only gets it — and Sly Stallone — back on its feet, but completely reinvigorates it.

The smelling salts have been delivered by Ryan Coogler and Michael B. Jordan, the directing/acting duo who made their mark with the excellent *Fruitvale Station*. That their second act should be to revamp a franchise that started before they were even born is surprising, but welcome. And if, at times, *Creed* follows the tracks of the first *Rocky* a little too reverently, it's no mere retread. There's a different energy at play here.

Much of that stems from Coogler's direction, flashy when it needs to be (along with cinematographer Maryse Alberti, he shoots one fight sequence in a single unbroken take), and impressively controlled, conjuring up a sense of time and place that feels as authentic and informed by Coogler's experiences as *Rocky* was by Stallone's. Race is addressed, of course, but it's never the film's overriding preoccupation: instead, the focus is on the problems that come living with a legacy, and trying to escape from a shadow that seems endless.

As the son of Apollo Creed, the effortlessly charismatic Jordan nails his father's flamboyance, but also gives Donny a brittleness beneath the *braggadocio*. He's a young man caught between the desire to turn away from *that* surname, and the need to know a father who died before he was born. That's why he reaches out to Apollo's old friend, Rocky Balboa, for guidance.

There's a reason why this film isn't called *Rocky VII*, but fans of the Italian Stallion won't feel shortchanged by Balboa's second-banana role. From the moment Stallone shuffles on screen, weighed down by the baggage of six movies past including the loss of everyone he ever loved, he discovers notes he has never played as an actor. It's a generous turn as both actor and character, a literally supporting role. Rocky gathers a team to surround his new fighter and takes more delight in Donny's achievements than he ever did in his own. As he's slowly revitalised by Donny's presence, Stallone recaptures Rocky's nobility and sense of decency, allied to a raw pain that *will* prick tears from your eyes. A career of action dreck has often obscured the fact that Stallone can act, and here he gives perhaps his best performance. And that's a punch nobody could have seen coming. **CHRIS HEWITT**

Sly remained unrepentant over scoffing the last Lindor.

**VERDICT** The best *Rocky* film since the original, honouring the Stallone legacy while setting it in a different direction. Feel the need. The need for *Creed*.

## A War

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 8** / CERT. **15** / **115 MINS**
**DIRECTOR** Tobias Lindholm
**CAST** Pilou Asbæk, Tuva Novotny, Søren Malling

→ Tobias Lindholm's *A Hijacking* follow-up is a powerful war drama that shows a soldier (Asbæk) in Afghanistan making a snap decision that could save lives but ruin his own. It's a riveting, complex film that asks one simple question: what do you do when there's no right answer? **OR**

## Le Mepris

★★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 1** / CERT. **15** / **103 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Jean-Luc Godard
**CAST** Brigitte Bardot, Michel Piccoli, Jack Palance

→ Amongst other things, Godard's '63 belter toggles between a sad study of a failing marriage (Bardot and Piccoli, both superb) on a film set and a sharp satire on '60s international co-productions. See it for its widescreen beauty, playful film buffery and Bardot at her most radiant. **IF**

## Sherpa

★★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **15** / **96 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Jennifer Peedom
**CAST** Phurba Tashi Sherpa, Ed Douglas, Russell Brice, Karma Doma Sherpa

→ A tragedy during shooting shifted this film's focus from a record 22nd ascent of Everest to the ramifications of the 2014 avalanche that killed 16 guides. The result is an intimate and provocative exposé of the dangers, racial tensions and economic realities on the world's highest mountain. **PP**

ALSO OUT



The Slightly Disgruntled Three: Tim Roth, Kurt Russell and Jennifer Jason Leigh.



# The Hateful Eight

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 8** / CERT. **18** / **167 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Quentin Tarantino
**CAST** Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Walton Goggins, Demian Bichir, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen, Bruce Dern

**PLOT** Wyoming, circa 1875. A group of strangers find themselves stranded in a log cabin during a blizzard. But lousy coffee and awkward small talk are just the start of their problems — there are clues that one or more in their midst may be plotting something heinous. And so begins a long, hard night, in which nobody on the cast-list is safe.

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ACCORDING TO Quentin Tarantino, you need to make three Westerns to be considered a Westerns director. His second, *The Hateful Eight*, might follow chronologically from *Django Unchained*, being set after the US Civil War, but it's a very different beast. It starts huge. A brooding Ennio Morricone overture. A Cinerama logo. Stunning snowy landscapes (though if *The Hateful Eight* had a cold-off with *The Revenant*, Iñárritu's film would edge it). But, like Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo* or the TV Westerns he grew up on, Tarantino ultimately narrows his focus to the intimate: eight glourious basterds in one cabin for nearly three hours. And that clash of characters is tons of fun.

As ever with Tarantino, the storytelling works by stealth. The first half is unhurried, even patience-testing. Bounty hunter John Ruth (Kurt Russell) journeys to deliver badass Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) to Red Rock for hanging, picking up Marquis Warren (Samuel L. Jackson) and Sheriff Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins) like a horse-drawn Uber. Their trip is full of chat about Chattanooga steaks, a letter from Abraham Lincoln and Civil War reminiscences, but there's little in the way of compelling incident. And even when we reach stagecoach stopover Minnie's Haberdashery and meet the second half of the 'orrible octet — Bob 'The Mexican' (Demian Bichir), hangman Oswaldo Mobray (Tim Roth), cowpoke Joe Gage (Michael Madsen) and Confederate General Smithers (Bruce Dern) — the slow-burning chat continues.

But, like John Carpenter's *The Thing*, an atmosphere of unease, dread and distrust builds almost imperceptibly, ending in a barnstorming Samuel L. Jackson speech that finishes act one with a bullet. By the time you come back after the interval to a cheeky Tarantino-narrated recap, it has its claws in you. As the pieces slot quickly into place, the investment you made in these people and their predicaments begins to pay off, big time.

If the first half is driven by Russell on stoic, bearlike form, the second belongs to Jackson. Marquis Warren is the best role he has had in ages, owning the floor as a Civil War Columbo trying to prove that some rat in the wooden house is in "cahoots" with Domergue. Goggins is great comic relief (but also more), Leigh is put through the mill (she is punched, rifle-whacked and scalded with hot stew just in the first half) and Roth has fun as the kind of eloquent European dandy recently monopolised by Christoph Waltz.

Nerds will have a field day checking off Tarantino tropes: chapter headings, Red Apple tobacco, timeline jiggery-pokery and a last act full of glorious Grand Guignol. But there is freshness too. Morricone's score, Tarantino's first with a composer, is used sparingly but effectively. Even more than *Django*, *Eight* is a politically charged film — especially its first half — as much about race and division in America today as a homage to *The High Chaparral*. And, along with DP Robert Richardson, Tarantino has a blast orchestrating interior mayhem utilising the widths of Ultra Panavision 70, perhaps the only widescreen format capable of encompassing Kurt Russell's magnificent 'tache. **IAN FREER**

**VERDICT** On a par with *Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*, *The Hateful Eight* starts low-key but ultimately delivers big, bold, blood-soaked rewards. Roll on, QT Western number three.



## Bolshoi Babylon

★★★

OUT **JANUARY 8** / CERT. **PG** / **87 MINS.**
**DIRECTORS** Nick Read, Mark Franchetti
**CAST** Sergei Filin, Vladimir Urin, Boris Akimov

→ Read and Franchetti's peek into Moscow's Bolshoi ballet company starts with higher drama than *Black Swan*. In 2013, the Bolshoi's artistic director, Sergei Filin, was attacked with acid in a hit by dancer Pavel Dmitrichenko, who felt Filin had overlooked his ballerina girlfriend. In talking heads we see how the divided company took sides, though this never squeezes the juice the set-up deserves. Although it's good on the drive and neuroses that come with such a potentially short career, you yearn for more dancing. More interestingly, it paints the Bolshoi as a microcosm of Russia, in thrall to tradition but beset by greed, backstabbing and corruption. **IF**



## Sisters

★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **TBC** / **118 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Jason Moore
**CAST** Amy Poehler, Tina Fey, Ike Barinholtz

→ The second movie for TV's comedy queens threatens to become an ordeal, but finds its funny. Two bickering sisters are flunking middle age — Poehler's Maura is a shy square and Fey's Kate a cash-strapped wild child — until they mount one final blowout at the family home. The preamble is laughless, however, and neither character makes much sense. Then, as Fey calls upon her resurrected peers to abandon their jaded adulthoods, the movie and party flip into the PC-be-damned joys of *Animal House* or *The Hangover*. The sisters fall out, the house falls down, and everyone gets really filthy. And a fat man on coke is always hilarious. **IN**



Jacob Tremblay and Brie Larson in Room. World's biggest omelette just out of shot.

# Room

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 15** / CERT. **15** / **118 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Lenny Abrahamson
**CAST** Brie Larson, Jacob Tremblay, Joan Allen

**PLOT** A mother (Larson) and her son (Tremblay) live in a tiny room, but only one of them knows that there's a whole other world outside it.

BE WARNED, *ROOM* is a wrenching watch. It's a story so abhorrent and seemingly hopeless that there may be times you don't want it to go on, but within its tight confines Lenny Abrahamson, with a script by Emma Donaghue, finds warmth and hope. It is, against all odds, uplifting.

Ma (Brie Larson) and Jack (Jacob Tremblay) live in a ten-square-foot space. To Jack this is the entire world, where objects — Table, Rug, Wardrobe — are the only one of their kind and anything outside is as intangible as heaven. To Ma, this is her prison, a cell in which she's been kept for seven years since she was kidnapped at 19 by a man who has raped her countless times and fathered Jack. But she keeps all these hard realities of life from her son. The brilliance of Lenny Abrahamson's adaptation of Donaghue's Booker Prize-nominated novel is in making us see these two worlds as one, Jack's magic and Ma's horror, like oil and water, emulsifying into a twisted truth that helps both keep a grip on sanity.

Abrahamson's direction is astonishing, not just because he constantly finds new ways to see the room, keeping the viewer trapped in there but surprising us all the time, but for the performances he wrings from his cast. Larson has been threatening for years to truly break out, and *Room* should be the film to make it happen. She's so raw as to verge on unwatchable, the pain she conveys just too upsetting to sit with. Nine year-old Tremblay gives one of the best child performances ever put on screen, utterly convincing as his world is cracked open. A lot of the credit for that has to go to Abrahamson. Very young child actors are only ever as good as their director.

*Room* asks an enormous amount of its audience, dragging you further into darkness in the journey to find some distant light. It's a mark of how well Abrahamson has told his story that by the end, which takes you to places once unimaginable, you'll likely be willing to go through it all again. **OLLY RICHARDS**

**VERDICT** Tough, but resilience is amply rewarded. If last year's larky *Frank* suggested Abrahamson was a director to watch, this makes him a director to be cherished.

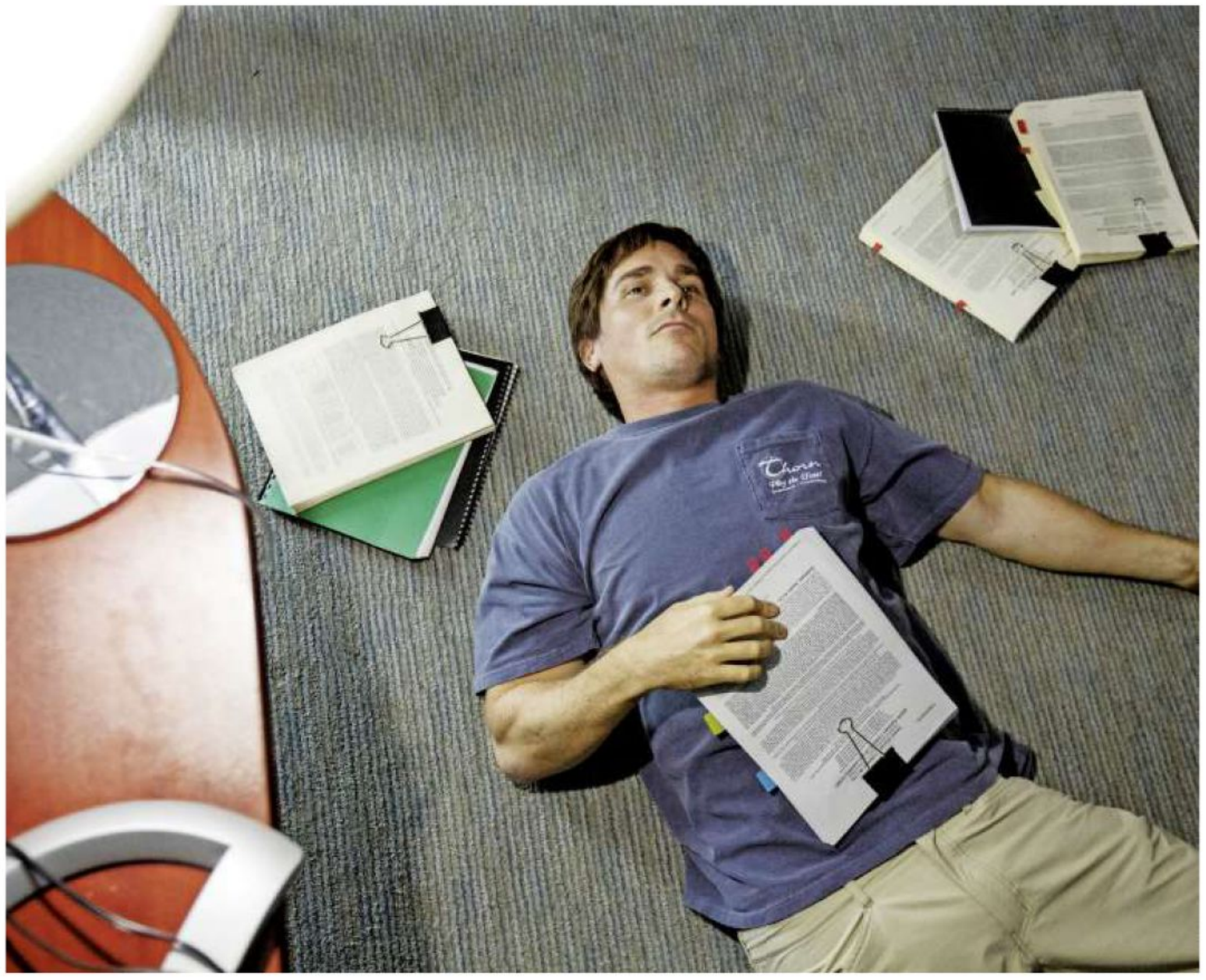
# The Big Short

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 22** / CERT. **15 / 130 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Adam McKay
**CAST** Steve Carell, Brad Pitt, Ryan Gosling, Christian Bale, Marisa Tomei, Melissa Leo, Selena Gomez, Margot Robbie

**PLOT** An account of the 2008 banking crisis, focusing on the investors who saw it coming and who bet against the housing market ('shorting' it).



His clipboard was deceptively weighty.

HOW DO YOU MAKE the financial crisis compelling? The challenge has largely defeated filmmakers. They've tried the personal tragedy (*99 Homes*), the documentary (*Inside Job*) and the ultra-serious recreation (*Margin Call*) — and while all had their strengths, they barely touched audiences not already interested in the disaster. But Adam McKay may have a better approach, by emphasising not just the criminality of the system but also its absurdity.

From the off, McKay bends over backwards to make this digestible. Ryan Gosling's breezy, arch narration casually ignores the fourth wall, and the cast is packed with charismatic superstars. Christian Bale is Michael Burry MD, the antisocial hedge fund manager who first sees the rot at the heart of the mortgage derivatives market. Soon Steve Carell's furious Mark Baum and his team take interest, partnering up with Gosling's wheeler-dealing Jared Vennett. They're followed by novice investors Jamie Shipley (Finn Wittrock) and Charlie Geller (John Magaro) — who are in turn guided by Brad Pitt's eccentric Ben Rickert. The film swings fluidly between these three main groups, never pausing enough to drag.

To dissect the more technical aspects of the crash, McKay cuts to silly little skits with yet more big names. Margot Robbie, in a bubble bath, explains derivatives, while Anthony Bourdain cooks up a storm that parallels the bankers cooking the books. It still can't make everything simple — these financial models were designed to be impenetrable — but the tongue-in-cheek approach offers a strong beginner's guide. McKay also never loses sight of the fact that financiers are socially maladroit nerds who only *think* they're masters of the universe, "like someone burst a *piñata* full of white guys who are bad at golf", as one character puts it.

There's an obvious limitation in the fact that the film's protagonists are part of the system; even as they see the crash coming, their aim is to cash in rather than prevent it. But compared to the reckless, grasping men who wrecked all our finances, they seem paragons of honour and probity — especially when their brilliant schemes become weights around their necks as the system stumbles on.

Though occasionally scrappy and arguably over-long, this is the best film yet to tackle the biggest financial disaster since 1929. It informs and outrages us without resorting to Michael Moore-style haranguing, and if it can just find a mass audience, could finally inspire some change. **HELEN O'HARA**

**VERDICT** Witty, absurd and far more entertaining than it has any right to be, this could finally shed light on the financial crisis for those of us who found it all too boring to contemplate.

## At Any Price

★★★

OUT **JANUARY 1** / CERT. **18** / **102 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Ramin Bahrani
**CAST** Dennis Quaid, Zac Efron, Heather Graham

→ While all-American farmer Henry (Quaid) faces a crop crisis, his son Dean (Efron) chases his dream of becoming a speed racer. Heather Graham and Maika Monroe add heat to this handsome, slow-burning thriller that lacks the urgency of Bahrani's previous effort, *99 Homes*. **ALS**

## Innocence Of Memories

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 29** / CERT. **TBC** / **97 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Grant Gee
**CAST** Pandora Colin, Mehmet Ergen, Ara Güler, Süleyman Fidaye

→ Narrated by a character from Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Museum Of Innocence*, and illuminated by the artefacts of the Istanbul repository it engendered, this is a fascinating insight into the mind of the Nobel laureate and his city muse. Coolly intelligent and noirishly compelling. **DP**

## Lost In Karastan

★★★

OUT **JANUARY 22** / CERT. **15** / **96 MINS.**
**DIRECTOR** Ben Hopkins
**CAST** Matthew Macfadyen, MyAnna Buring, Noah Taylor, Richard van Weyden

→ Darkly debunking artistic vanity and the political cult of personality, this witty satire pitches a British director into the deep end when he agrees to make a national epic for a tinpot dictator. It's knowingly played and engagingly eccentric, but lacks edge. **PP**

ALSO OUT

# IN CINEMAS



## The Good Dinosaur

★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **PG** / **101 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Peter Sohn

**CAST (VOICES)** Raymond Ochoa, Jack Bright, Jeffrey Wright

→ From the stunning opening shot of water babbling over pebbles, it's clear that Pixar's technical animation skills are unbeatable — which is just as well, since the simpler and more blobby cartoon dinosaurs who inhabit this stunningly realised idyll aren't quite up to their usual standard. This is a lesser effort from the studio, a sweet, funny, very straightforward adventure about Apatosaurus Arlo (Raymond Ochoa) trying to find his way home with the help of only the dog-like boy Spot (Jack Bright). Despite a lot of heart it has none of the sophistication of, say, Inside Out and the journey feels underdeveloped and overly familiar (one key scene screams *Lion King*). But it's a beautiful world to visit, and the relationship between its central pair is so well drawn that you can overlook many of its shortcomings. **OR**



## Sleeping With Other People

★★★

OUT **JANUARY 1** / CERT. **15** / **101 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Leslye Headland

**CAST** Alison Brie, Jason Sudeikis, Adam Scott, Amanda Peet, Natasha Lyonne, Jason Mantzoukas

→ When love addict Lainey (Alison Brie) and womaniser Jake (Jason Sudeikis) meet again years after a one-night-stand, they agree to stay friends — with mixed results. Comparisons to *When Harry Met Sally* are obvious, but this is by no means a lazy rom-copy. Director Leslye Headland's follow-up to *Bachelorette* addresses big issues like the role of sex in relationships while delivering refreshing laughs thanks to a supporting cast who make their value known; Adam Brody's cameo is a revelation. However, while swinging between comedy and angst, the reasons behind the pair's commitment issues are never fully disclosed, softening any bite. Luckily, the two leads' chemistry make it a happy, if not completely satisfying, ending. **KP**

DID YOU KNOW?

Before Alison Brie starred in *Community*, in a neat coincidence her mother taught at a community college. Meta.





## The Night Before

★★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **15** / **101 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Jonathan Levine

**CAST** Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Seth Rogen, Anthony Mackie

→ Three unwise men — aimless Ethan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), father-to-be Isaac (Seth Rogen) and NFL star Chris (Anthony Mackie) — head off for one last Christmas night out to find The Nutcracka Ball, the world's greatest yuletide party. The result is a frenetic, hit-and-miss comedy of familiar bro-talk, *Die Hard* riffs and star cameos (hello, Miley Cyrus!) infused with warm seasonal spirit amid the dick pics. It's an inclusive film, showcasing the women's (Jillian Bell, Lizzy Caplan, Mindy Kaling) personalities while sweetly skewering the difficulty in maintaining adult friendships and persuasively arguing that the families we choose are as important as the ones foisted upon us. The three leads play well together but Rogen, be it ranting about his unborn kid or puking in a church, is the standout. **IF**



## Our Brand Is Crisis

★★★★

OUT **JANUARY 22** / CERT. **15** / **107 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** David Gordon Green

**CAST** Sandra Bullock, Billy Bob Thornton, Anthony Mackie

→ It's rare enough that a political documentary (Rachel Boynton's 2005 film of the same name) inspires a biting fictional satire, but it's more remarkable that it should become a vehicle for an A-list star whose usual taste in comedy is more broad. The setting is Bolivia 2002, where a right-wing politician has hired legendary US spin doctor 'Calamity' Jane Bodine (Sandra Bullock) to come out of retirement and mastermind his election campaign. Her nemesis is the equally formidable Pat Candy (Billy Bob Thornton), reigniting an old feud that puts score-settling before politics. Sparks fly, but the grim cynicism of modern politics adds subversive weight to the film's screwball comedy stylings and has a lot to say about modern politics, in the US as well as abroad. **DW**

DID YOU KNOW?

Anthony Mackie was college roommates with Lee Pace. That means Falcon used to hang out with Ronan The Accuser.





# In The Heart Of The Sea

★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **12A** / **122 MINS.**

**DIRECTOR** Ron Howard
**CAST** Chris Hemsworth, Brendan Gleeson, Ben Whishaw, Tom Holland

**PLOT** The true tale of Nantucket vessel the Essex, which was crippled by an encounter with a sperm whale. The survivors were left adrift in the Pacific in three jerry-rigged whaleboats.

IF YOU ARE telling the story that inspired *Moby-Dick*, what can possibly go wrong? Framed by the mechanism of having Brendan Gleeson's old salt recount the fate of the Essex to Herman Melville (Ben Whishaw), author-to-be of the Great American Novel, this promises a sea-faring epic told with all the doodads of modern cinema. So why so dramatically soggy? So overstretched? Who sidelines a 100-foot psychopathic sperm whale in search of truth?

With the non-fiction book by Nathaniel Philbrick (a name destined to write about 1820s whaling) providing verisimilitude, screenwriter Charles Leavitt musters a flotilla of yarns. Here is a clash of egos between veteran first mate Owen Chase (Chris Hemsworth, with an accent of no fixed bearing) and greenhorn Captain Pollard (Benjamin Walker, wasted as a posh nut) in gales of manly sea-spray (theme: class). Here the fretting over fished-out waters (theme: capitalism). Here the rash expedition to the mid-Pacific, patrolled by an oversized proto-Moby (theme: man versus nature). And finally, here are 90-odd days in an open boat while your waning fellows look increasingly tasty (theme: man as animal).

Great attention is paid to the authentic hum of history. Poor cabin boy Thomas Nickerson (Tom Holland) — we could call him Ishmael — is tasked with fetching oil from the inside of a rank whale skull. Cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle gets into the grain of the antique backdrop, setting the ship against Turner-esque skies. And in 3D, the confrontations between man and lifelike CG mega-beast, to lusty bellows of whaler jargon, gain a measure of spectacle.

But determined to encompass every facet of the Essex's woes (history and Melville focused on different aspects of the tale), Ron Howard's film is both overstuffed and undernourished. There's no gathering of suspense. Nothing feels hard won. It's all in too much of a hurry. Before facing the terrible menu choices once adrift, a film should take pause. If you're going to consume human flesh, you've got to chew it over first. **IAN NATHAN**

He could confirm that worse things did indeed happen at sea.

**VERDICT** For all the special effects and half-starved A-listers, this is a sodden beast. Perhaps there's a reason that Melville only told half the story.

# AT A GLANCE



*Sleeping With Other People*

**OUT NOW**


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Daddy's Home ★★★ p.46
The Good Dinosaur ★★★ p.52
In The Heart Of The Sea ★★ p.53
The Night Before ★★★★ p.52
Sherpa ★★★★ p.47
Sisters ★★★ p.50
Star Wars: The Force Awakens ★★★★ p.42


**JANUARY 1**


At Any Price ★★★ p.51
Joy ★★★ p.40
Le Mepris ★★★★★ p.47
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**JANUARY 8**


Bolshoi Babylon ★★★ p.50
The Hateful Eight ★★★★ p.48
A War ★★★★ p.47


**JANUARY 15**


Creed ★★★★ p.47
The Revenant ★★★★★ p.36
Room ★★★★ p.50


**JANUARY 22**


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The Big Short ★★★★ p.51
Lost In Karastan ★★★ p.51
Our Brand Is Crisis ★★★★ p.52


**JANUARY 29**


Innocence Of Memories ★★★★ p.51

# SEQUEL OUT

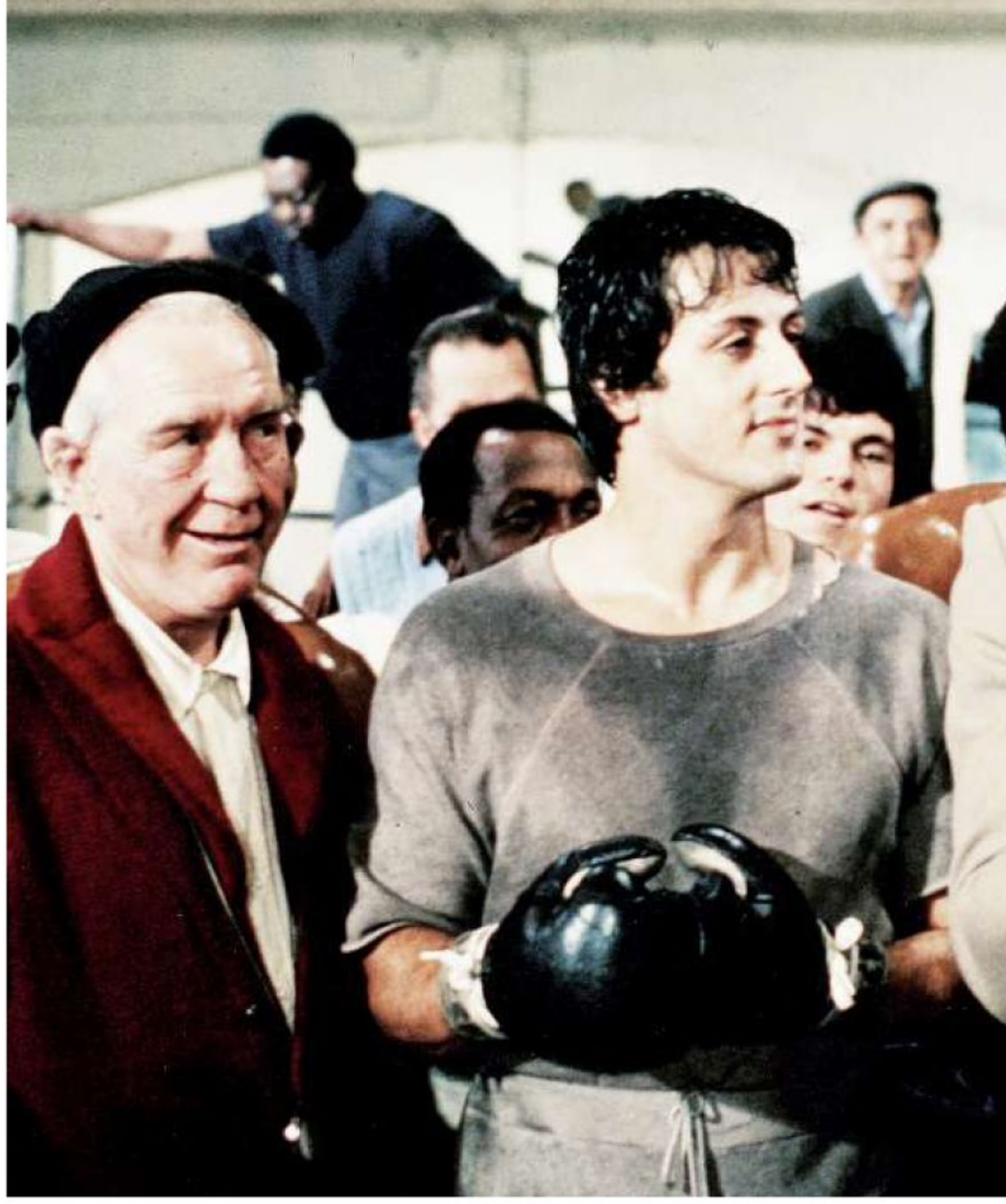
**THIRTY-NINE YEARS AFTER HE GATECRASHED THE 1977 OSCARS WITH *ROCKY*, SYLVESTER STALLONE COULD BE DOING IT AGAIN — EXCEPT THIS TIME THE MOVIE IS *CREED*, WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY 29 YEAR-OLD *ROCKY* FAN RYAN COOGLER...**

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**









## ROUND 1

March, 1977. Sylvester Stallone is on top of the world. *Rocky*, the boxing film that he wrote, starred in and made happen through sheer, bloody belligerence, has won Best Picture at the Oscars, beating *Taxi Driver*, *All The President's Men* and *Network*. Stallone himself loses out on Best Screenplay and Best Actor, but it's alright. There's a confidence about him, a sense that life is about to imitate art. Just like Rocky, the big time is finally beckoning to Stallone. As the night ends, a jubilant Sly is pictured throwing a right-hand jab at a giant statue of Oscar. The message is clear: "We've got unfinished business, big guy. I'm coming for you."

## ROUND 2

In Richmond, California, during the mid-'90s, a young African-American boy named Ryan Coogler settles down with his dad to watch *Rocky*. A budding athlete, the film connects with young Ryan on a deep level.

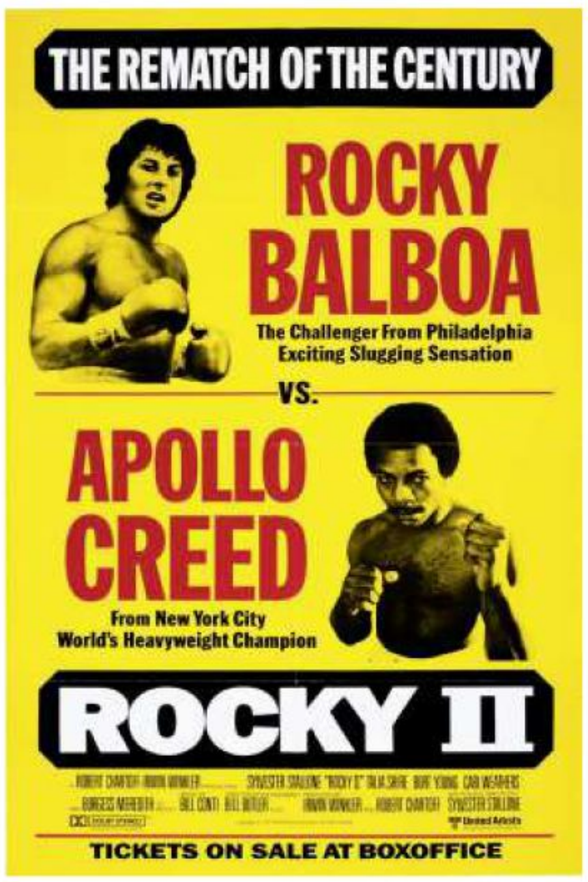
"*Rocky* was like *Star Wars* for the streets," he tells *Empire* now. "It's something that's always been around. You see in hip-hop culture that rappers rap about *Rocky* all the time."

Young Ryan is drawn to Stallone's Rocky Balboa, but his eye is caught by his ostentatious opponent, played by Carl Weathers. "He was one of the first black characters I knew, and I remember him being so cool. He called the shots in a way that was very intelligent and he was very unapologetic about being black."

The character's name? Apollo Creed.

## ROUND 3

1979. In *Rocky II*, the 'rematch of the century' is on between Rocky and Apollo, who won the climactic fight at the end of the first movie. But the most interesting development comes off-screen, where Stallone has taken the bold step of making his directorial debut. He's keen to prove that the first go-round wasn't a fluke, so he's making a movie about a man keen to prove that the first go-round wasn't a fluke. The divide between Stallone and Balboa, already wafer-thin, has disappeared completely. Life is imitating art once again.




Sadly, there are no Oscars. Not even a nomination. Already, critical acclaim and Stallone are becoming strange bedfellows, but the movie is a huge hit. And this time, Rocky wins the fight.

## ROUND 4

Now in his early twenties, Coogler steps away from athletics and towards filmmaking, with a few shorts at the USC School Of Cinematic Arts. He's preparing to plunge into the real world when he's struck by a bombshell: his father is sick with a neuromuscular disorder.






**This page, clockwise from top left:** The 1977 Oscars; The original *Rocky*; *Rocky IV*; Michael B. Jordan in *Creed*; The *Rocky II* poster.

"The doctors were telling us we were going to lose him soon," admits Coogler. "I thought my dad was going to die." He starts thinking about father figures and legacies. "As Millennials, we watch our parents age," he says. "That was my inspiration for the film. I looked at myself and said, 'What kind of person would I be if my father wasn't there? If he was never here?'"

Coogler has an audacious idea: he wants to bring Rocky back, Stallone and all, but the film won't be *Rocky VII*, or *Balboa*, or a variation thereof. Although he'll be a huge part of it, the movie won't be about him. It will follow the fortunes of a young black boxer called Adonis, who's the illegitimate son of Rocky's greatest opponent.

His surname will be the title: *Creed*.

## ROUND 5

1982. Stallone is now one of the biggest movie stars in the world. If he hasn't









**Top:** Stallone with Mr. T in *Rocky III*. **Here:** Director Ryan Coogler with Stallone on the set of *Creed*.

troubled Oscar since, it's a mere trifle to a man who's just about to add *First Blood*, and troubled Vietnam vet John Rambo, to his portfolio. But first comes *Rocky III*, in which Rocky — biceps a little more bronzed, hair a little more feathered — is on top, with success beginning to dull his edge. It's glossy entertainment, but in hindsight it's hard not to see Stallone the writer, Stallone the artist, asking serious, searching questions of himself. There's that life/art overlap once again.

## ROUND 6

Determined to make *Creed* a reality, Coogler wrangles a meeting with a sceptical Stallone. "At the time I pitched him, I hadn't made a feature film yet," laughs Coogler. "It was absurd that I was even in his office... These movies mean so much to him, he has so much of his life tied into these movies. On the surface, you can see why he would be slow to get involved. I was asking somebody to let me have a piece of his life."

With one mighty blow, Sylvester Stallone kills *Creed*.

## ROUND 7

1985. Sylvester Stallone has killed Creed. *Rocky IV*, a hugely overblown but ridiculously fun movie, gets its emotional payoff just over half an hour in, when Weathers' overconfident Apollo is cut down by Dolph Lundgren's Russian man-mountain, Ivan Drago. It's okay — here comes Rocky to wreak revenge, show those pesky Russkies how it's done, wrap himself in the US flag, and essentially end the Cold War with one punch.

Again, *Rocky IV* reflects where Stallone was in his life: a man with nary a misstep to his name, who must have felt invincible, who could have no idea he was just a couple of years away from the horror of *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot*.

## ROUND 8

With *Creed* waiting for the ten count, Coogler swiftly moves on and makes his debut with *Fruitvale Station*, a tragic true-life tale starring Michael B. Jordan as a young black man who is killed by a white cop. As he's prepping the movie,













Coogler realises the key to resurrecting *Creed* is right there in front of him.

"He came to me with the idea and I said, 'Man, that sounds awesome,'" recalls Jordan. "He told me the inspiration came from his dad, and that's a very honest place."

Meanwhile, Stallone, with a nudge from his wife and agent, is changing his mind about putting Rocky's stingy-brim fedora back on. Another meeting, this time with Coogler and Jordan (during which Stallone shadow-boxes with the young actor), convinces him to say yes.

"This movie was so meta-textual," laughs Coogler. "So many of the scenes and the things we were dealing with in the movie were happening in real life. The scenes you see between Sly and Mike early in the film's first act were similar to the meetings I had with Sly. We had to convince Sly, the old warrior, to let us do this. One thing was constantly informing the other."

## ★ ROUND 9 ★

1990. And art won't stop imitating life. At the fag end of the '80s, Stallone was fast becoming an outmoded relic. He'd had a string of disappointments, and needed a hit fast. His answer was to return to his roots by returning Rocky to his. *Rocky V* sees the Italian Stallion in danger of being put down. Conned out of all his cash, he returns to Philadelphia, clashes with his son (played by Stallone's real-life son Sage, who would die tragically in 2012), and ends up squabbling in the street with a fighter he manages. It's all very grubby and grotty, and a far cry from the magic of the first movie, despite the presence of original director John G. Avildsen. It underperforms financially. Rocky's race, it seems, might be run.

**This page, clockwise from top left:** Stallone with Jordan in *Creed*; With Talia Shire and real-life son Sage in *Rocky V*; In *Creed*.

## ★ ROUND 10 ★

January, 2015. Stallone arrives on the set of *Creed*, without the distraction of directing and, pertinently, without the task of writing Rocky's dialogue for the first time. And suddenly it dawns on Coogler that he'll spend the next few months telling Rocky Balboa how to be Rocky Balboa.

"He has so much in the well of experience with this character," says the director. "Sly is very intense, and there were times he would push back, but he was always game for another take."

It's not hard to see why. Through most of his career, Stallone has made a point of being invulnerable. He's 69, but acting his age has rarely been on the agenda. Coogler wants to change that.

Thankfully for the director, in the years since his father's original prognosis, he's made a recovery. But the theme of mortality is still very much on his mind. "Time hits everybody," he says.

*Creed* sees Rocky face his greatest battle, tackling an illness that could end his life. For that, Coogler wanted a Rocky we haven't seen before: old and frail. And that means a Stallone we haven't seen before, too. "That was a tough thing for him," admits Coogler. "As an actor, I think he was excited by the opportunity. He found it very freeing. But I think it was the business side of him that was a little unsure that people were ready to see Rocky like that. I was constantly reassuring him that we were. That's how we had to see him if we were to ever see him again."





## ★ ROUND 11 ★

2006. Sixteen years have passed since *Rocky V*, and Stallone's career is deep in the doldrums. 1997's *Cop Land* was a blip on a radar that has since contained the *Get Carter* remake, slasher flick *Eye See You*, and the nadir of his career, playing seventh banana to the *Spy Kids*. Once again, he heads out on the *Rocky* road, drawing deep into his personal life and writes and directs a movie about an old stager given a new lease of life when he receives an unexpected shot at glory.

Miraculously, *Rocky Balboa* is the best *Rocky* since the first sequel. It is critically well received and, although it doesn't deliver a TKO at the box office, it gives Sly back his career, first with 2008's *Rambo*, then later *The Expendables*.

**Top:** Stallone in *Rocky Balboa*. **Above:** With Jordan in *Creed*.

However, though Stallone is fantastic in *Rocky Balboa*, drawing upon a well of repressed anguish, awards recognition is still no closer. In fact, the closest he's come to Oscar since that night in 1977 is a couple of guest presenting gigs and an awful John Landis comedy nobody wants to talk about.

## ★ ROUND 12 ★

*Creed* could be about to change that. The film has been a big hit and critically lauded in the States. And while Jordan, Coogler and DP Maryse Alberti have all been praised, any awards talk is focusing firmly on Stallone, who brings a heartbreaking depth and dignity to the role.

The Golden Globes have nominated Stallone for Best Supporting Actor, while he's already picked up awards from several critics' associations in the States. An Oscar nomination seems certain. "I think that he's incredibly deserving," says Coogler. "I don't know if anybody worked harder in a supporting role. Mike Jordan is a phenomenal talent and Sly was right there with him every day at 68 years of age. It's a unique thing to see."

Only five actors have been nominated twice for the same role. If Stallone is given the nod by the Academy, he'll hold the record for the longest gap between nominations. If it happens and results in a statuette for Stallone, it would possibly be the most romantic Oscar win for years.

After all, who could resist the story of a legend who's coaxed back into doing what he does best by a precocious young talent who wasn't even born when he had his greatest success? Time for life to imitate art one more time. E

***CREED* IS OUT ON JANUARY 15 AND IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 47.**

## CREED: THE DEEP CUTS

**THE FILM IS STUDDED WITH REFERENCES TO PAST *ROCKY* FILMS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE LESS OBVIOUS ONES...**

### The Third Fight

At the end of *Rocky III*, Apollo and Rocky have one last bout, but the film ends with the first punch. In *Creed*, Rocky finally reveals who won. It's...

### Rocky's Turtles

In the first movie, we meet Cuff and Link, the turtles that Rocky bought from Adrian in lieu of having the courage to say anything meaningful to her. In one brief shot, Coogler lets us know that one of them, at least, is still alive and flipping.

### The Chicken

In *Rocky II*, Burgess Meredith's Mickey whips Rocky into shape by making him run around after chickens. Rocky does the same to Donny.

### Son Of Duke

*The Wire*'s Wood Harris shows up briefly as the trainer of one of Donny's opponents. The point's never laboured, but he's playing the son of Tony Burton's Duke, who was Apollo's — and then Rocky's — right-hand man through the previous six movies. Harris' character is called Tony 'Little Duke' Burton.

### Return Of Mickey

As Rocky assumes the role of trainer to Donny, so too does he adopt some of the mannerisms favoured by Mickey back in the day. Watch the way he adjusts his hat whenever he gets nervous.

### Eulogy For Apollo

At one point we're told that Rocky hasn't spoken to Mary Anne, Apollo's widow (played again by Phylicia Rashad), in years. The last time they spoke? Apollo's funeral in *Rocky IV*.


DEAD

# P SH

EMPIRE ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

**Zombie hordes, sword-wielding Bennet sisters, a bomb-hurling Bingley... *Pride + Prejudice + Zombies* is a Jane Austen adaptation like no other. Photographer Mary McCartney ventured on set to capture the chaos, exclusively for *Empire***

WORDS **HELEN O'HARA**

# THE SCRAPPY COUPLE

You can't have any take on *Pride And Prejudice* without Mr. Darcy and Lizzie Bennet, played here by Sam Riley and Lily James. But, even beyond the addition of brain-craving undead, changes are afoot. As James explains, the Bennet sisters can now "do spinning round-kicks into slicing someone's head off. We have daggers hidden in our knickers."

Riley, meanwhile, says he's playing this Darcy as "a mix of Colin Firth, Alex from *A Clockwork Orange* and Sean Connery in *Dr. No*." He's still required to deliver Austen's romantic dialogue, "but sometimes you're saying that while killing things."

# LENA AND MEANER

Seth Grahame-Smith's Austen remix is set against a zombie outbreak rather than the Napoleonic Wars, the rich reacting much as they did to the bubonic plague, retreating to their mansions. But they do foray out to fight, chief among them Lena Headey's Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Forget the elderly matriarch of past films; Headey's one-eyed, samurai sword-wielder is a whole new level of formidable.

"The idea is that your martial training is like going to the right school," says director Burr Steers. "Japan for the rich, China for the rest. England at this period was in Asia, bringing back things like tea and china. Why wouldn't you bring back fighting skills too?"

## FURTHER AFIELD IN ENGLAND

"We make this a coherent world that would be interesting even without zombies," says Steers. "That's why we shot on all these great old estates; it's reality — just off a bit." Stately homes like Syon House and Hatfield House were used during the shoot, as well as "every muddy field in England", as one crew member puts it to *Empire* on set, as we stand in, yes, a muddy field. "Everything I've ever filmed — *Downton Abbey*, *Cinderella* — the overwhelming impression is coldness," says James, shivering beneath a puffa jacket. "But it's like childbirth. You forget."



## STEERS AT THE HELM

Steers' directorial debut was 2002's *Igby Goes Down*, an indie hit which led to a stream of work in comedies like *17 Again*, but also a lot of frustrating time spent developing unmade films. Meanwhile, an adaptation of Seth Grahame-Smith's riff on Jane Austen had been doing the rounds since 2009, crossing the desks of David O. Russell, Mike White and Craig Gillespie. Then it came to Steers.

"I looked at it and it was immediately clear to me how to do it. Everyone [who had previously attempted an adaptation] had strayed from the real *Pride And Prejudice*, yet the original always seems to work in movies; the more Jane Austen, the better. So I thought of staging it during a zombie pandemic, the way you'd stage *Richard III* in Nazi Germany. The wink is that there is no wink."

## FUN WITH BINGLEY AND JANE

The genius of *Pride And Prejudice* is it has *two* love stories: let's not forget Jane Bennet (Bella Heathcote) and the lunk-headed Mr. Bingley (Douglas Booth).

"It's the same Jane," says Heathcote. "She manages to retain a sense of grace."

Not so, Bingley. "He carries a French carbine but doesn't know how to use it," says Booth. "Bingers just tries to get by."

So do they feel Jane Austen might crawl out of her grave to chastise cast and crew? "It's still telling her story," insists Heathcote, "and the women are, if anything, stronger. Warriors in a sense. I hope she'd be flattered. I would be." E

***PRIDE + PREJUDICE + ZOMBIES* IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 12 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.**

NO FICTIONAL CHARACTER HAS EVER HIJACKED AN *EMPIRE* FEATURE. BEFORE HERE. BEFORE NOW. BEFORE THE KING. YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR FIRST TIME.

DON'T TURN THE PAGE YET! REVEL IN THE GLORY THAT IS MY CINEMATIC RETURN! MOUTH: UNSEWN. MIND: UNHINGED. WOMEN AND CHILDREN: UNSAFE. TO BLAME: UNCLE KEVIN.

Deadpool, photographed exclusively for *Empire* in Los Angeles on July 23, 2015.

# REGENERATION

HOW RYAN REYNOLDS FELL IN LOVE WITH, ALMOST KILLED, THEN RESCUED A FANBOY FAVOURITE X-MEN UNIVERSE CHARACTER: THE UBER-VIOLENT, ULTRA-IRREVERENT

## DEADPOOL

WORDS
OWEN WILLIAMS

PHOTOGRAPHY
ART STREIBER



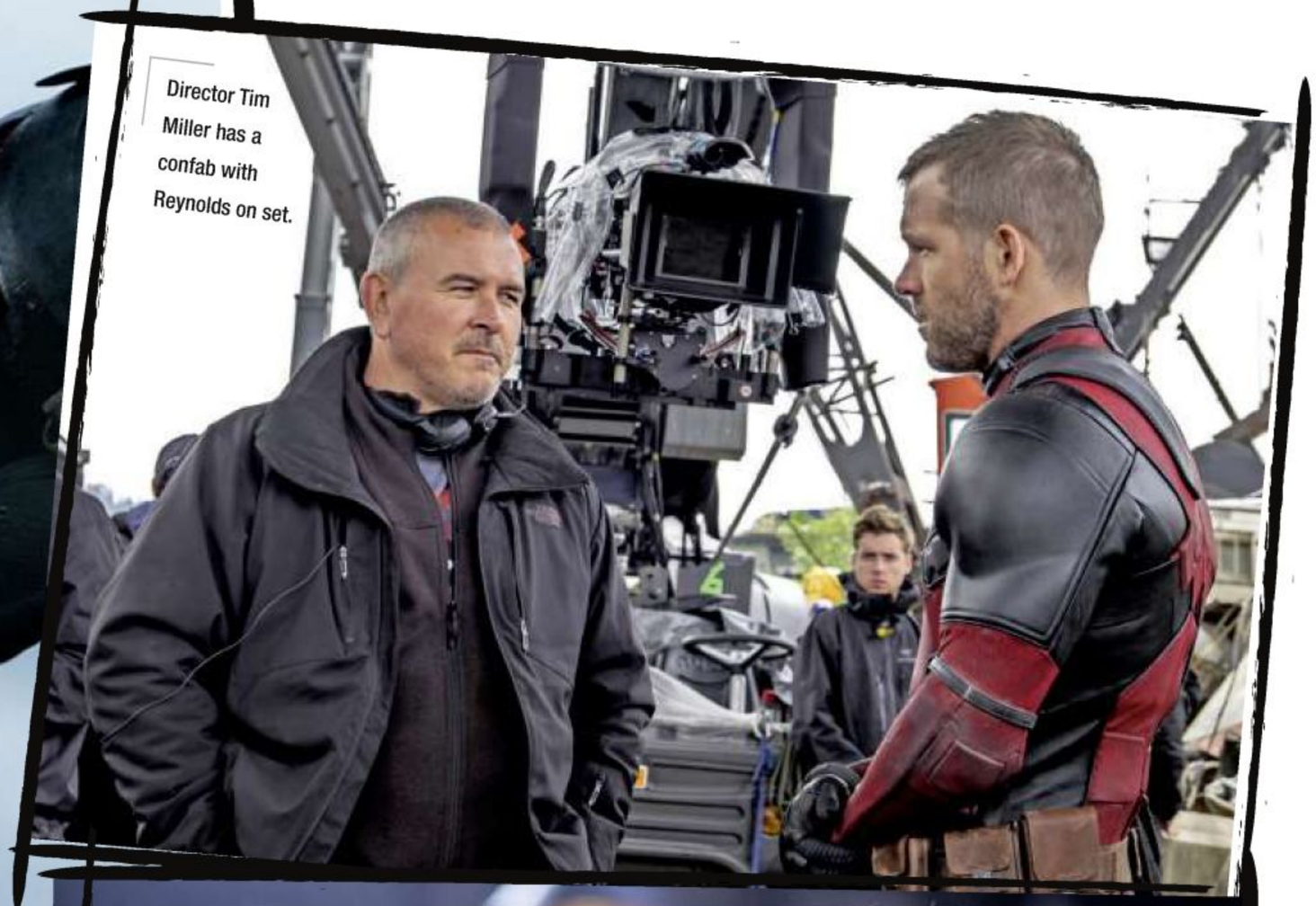
Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) with Negasonic Teenage Warhead (Brianna Hildebrand). Nerds! Note her New Mutants uniform.

**RYAN REYNOLDS WAS TAKING** a break from filming in Vancouver, Canada, when to his surprise a studio executive handed him a pile of comic books. Reynolds was in the middle of shooting a bloody, action-packed Marvel Comics adaptation in which he played a cocky, profane, sword-wielding hero. The comic series through which he was now flicking was also a Marvel product. Its protagonist? A cocky, profane sword-wielding hero. "Seeing as you're essentially playing this guy anyway," said the exec, who had spotted the similarities, "maybe you should play him for real."

It was 2004, the movie was the Wesley Snipes-fronted *Blade: Trinity*, Reynolds' character vampire-hunter Hannibal King, and the series in his hands was titled *Deadpool*. The actor took in the character's striking red-and-black suit and mask, his aptitude for colourful, inventive violence, his intriguing, fourth wall-breaking self-awareness as a comic-book character and a knack for one-liners that matched Reynolds' own (he had for *Blade: Trinity* just improvised the immortal diss, "cock-juggling thundercunt").

Deadpool, aka Wade Wilson, had been presented to Reynolds in terms of his similarities to Hannibal King. But what really excited Reynolds were the differences — to both *Blade: Trinity's* motormouth and, indeed, any other superhero. "I pored through the comics and realised that this character occupies a space in the comic-book universe that nobody else does," says Reynolds now. "I still feel that way." Specifically, he says, it's the "gallows humour", the self-reflexiveness of the character and the chance to do something in the genre that isn't "just for kids" that appeals. "There are moments where we really just venture into the heart of darkness and stay there for a few beats," he explains, "but then it also has this very humorous undertone. We can go places



Director Tim Miller has a confab with Reynolds on set.



T. J. Miller as Weasel, Deadpool's sidekick. Is he the joker, or is he the ace of spades?

and do things with this that you couldn't do with any other superhero property."

Eleven years later, and *Empire* has found Reynolds once more in Vancouver, Canada shooting a bloody, action-packed Marvel Comics adaptation. Except this time, he is both the star and a producer. And he's playing the right character. We are in Riverview Hospital, a former mental-health facility that has, over the years, played host to such productions as *The X-Files*, *Jennifer's Body* and *Watchmen* and is now standing in for a sleazy Mexican clinic which provides phony cures for cancer patients. Blood has been spread thickly over the tiled floor. It pools around generously scattered scraps of raw chicken, which have spewed from a kicked-over bucket (the patients, you see, have been led to believe these are their just-removed tumours).

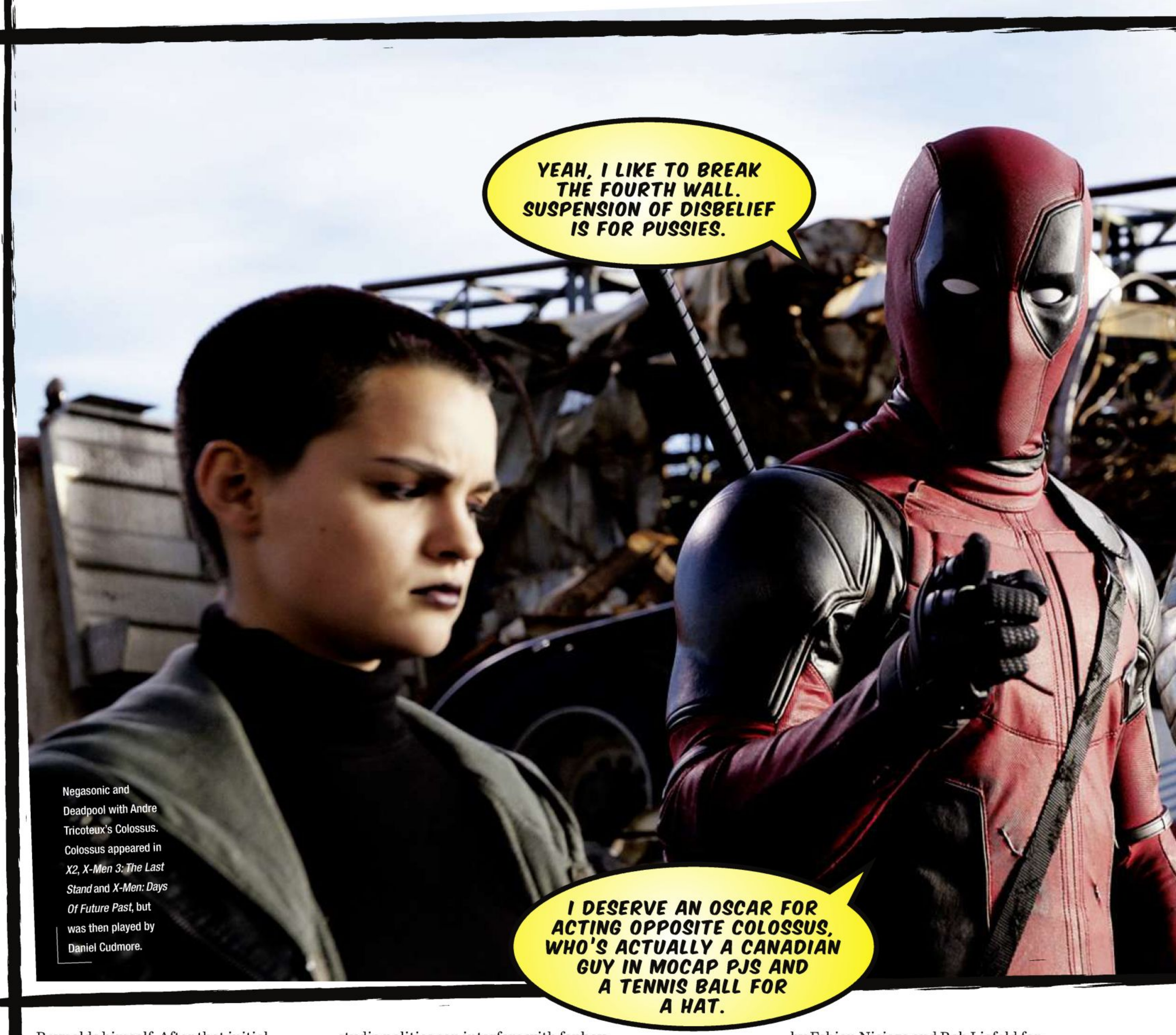


Reynolds' Wade Wilson hasn't yet fully transformed into the "Regenerating Degenerate" Deadpool, so is decked only in a grubby grey hoodie over a yellow T-shirt, with baggy brown trousers and scuffed sneakers. His hair is patchy, the result of Wade's terminal illness, which the former special forces operative is desperate to cure. Having just realised his "Cancer World Tour" has led him down yet another blind alley, he's angrily launched himself at the clinic's head quack (Mexican actor Luis Javier, in shabby medical scrubs and sporting a greasy ponytail with a comb-over), and the two have embarked on an unapologetically vicious, unchoreographed brawl. They writhe on the oozy floor, slipping around in the copious stage-blood and poultry chunks. It is hard to believe this scene, with all its grue and brutality, will appear in a movie that is officially considered to be the eighth in 20th Century Fox's *X-Men* franchise. For Reynolds, it's hard to believe it's happening at all.

"I had just about mentally divorced the idea of ever doing this movie," the exhausted, dripping star tells *Empire* after picking himself up. "But I always knew what I wanted to do here." Put simply, he wanted *Deadpool* done right. After all, he had already experienced what it was like to do Deadpool wrong.

**THIS MOVIE IS A UNIQUE** cinematic rescue mission. Ryan Reynolds has been Wade Wilson before, appearing in a supporting role in 2009 misfire *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, the first and best-forgotten solo outing for Hugh Jackman's clawed mutant anti-hero.

Given he's the so-called "Merc With A Mouth", Deadpool's transformation into a Frankengoon with his mouth glued shut confused and incensed fans familiar with the character. Not least ▷




Negasonic and Deadpool with Andre Tricoteux's Colossus. Colossus appeared in *X2*, *X-Men 3: The Last Stand* and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, but was then played by Daniel Cudmore.

Reynolds himself. After that initial, fateful encounter with the comics five years earlier, he'd set about developing a Deadpool movie at studio New Line, to no avail. So when 20th Century Fox had offered him the role in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, he was at first understandably hesitant. Though, ultimately, he reasoned that it was impossible to refuse. "Basically I was given the opportunity to step in and play Deadpool in that capacity or not play him at all," he says.

So he jumped in, and was excited to do so, the "fluid situation" of a writers' strike even necessitating that he pen all his own dialogue, making Wade the film's strongest support character until an ill-conceived plot twist shut him up. "I knew the character; I knew how he would talk and move," he explains, "but the closed-up mouth thing was an addition that happened as we ventured further down the road, and obviously I don't write the cheques. Sometimes studio politics can interfere with fanboy dreams, including my own."

*Deadpool*, then, is not simply a reboot or a reimagining of the character: it's an actor correcting a past misfire. Such second chances are already an unlikely opportunity. But it's made even more extraordinary by the fact that, in the spirit of the source material, it has been conceived as an R-rated film in a traditionally PG-13 genre; a film that will also, in embracing the character's fourth wall-smashing, take meta-swipes at costumed mutants while somehow also embracing them. It has not been easy.

"The problem was finding a way to deliver a *Deadpool* script that could be digested and understood by the studio," says Reynolds. "Selling Fox on an *X-Men* property that works so far outside the normal experience you have with an *X-Men* character was tough."

It didn't hurt that he could at least point to great source material. Created by Fabian Nicieza and Rob Liefeld for *X-Men* spin-off *The New Mutants* in 1991, Deadpool had quickly proved a hit with appreciators of Marvel's mutant titles. Like evergreen favourite Wolverine, he's an amoral lone wolf with an accelerated healing factor, which makes him basically invincible (he once re-grew his head after a decapitation, and one story arc revealed he's still alive 800 years in the future). A preternatural martial artist, tactician, swordsman and marksman, he submitted himself to the Weapon X process — the secret military super-soldier programme that also gave Wolverine his adamantium skeleton and claws — as a last-chance treatment for his incurable cancer. Unfortunately, the surgery also regenerated the corrupted cells, meaning his body is constantly at war with itself, he's turned insane, and he's stuck with the scarring that makes him look, as Reynolds quips in the *Deadpool* trailer, like "a testicle with teeth".



In the short space of time between the *Wolverine* movie's pre-release anticipation and its vitriolic post-release critical reaction, there was some interest within Fox in developing *Deadpool* as kind of a spin-off to the spin-off. But as the *X-Men* franchise stalled and regrouped, to be eventually rebooted by Matthew Vaughn's '60s-set *X-Men: First Class* in 2011, Reynolds was left to fly the tattered red-and-black flag alone. His tenacity undiminished, he gradually got together a team of conspirators during a tortuous development process.

Writing partners Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick came aboard as early as 2009. The geeky-yet-businesslike pair had most recently written the razor-sharp horror-comedy *Zombieland*, and were also known for co-creating Spike TV's comic faux-reality series *The Joe Schmoe Show*.

"(*Then Fox executive*) Drew Crevello invited us to pitch a Deadpool story," Reese recalls. "We loved the character and really wanted the job, but we felt that we'd seen enough superhero origin stories, even at that point. We just dove in with Deadpool having an adventure, ignoring where he came from, and Ryan really liked our take. But he also felt that it was important to back up a little."

Over the next few months, Reynolds and his writers thrashed out the basics of the chaotic story, structuring it as a "fractured narrative" which interweaves Deadpool's beginnings with a present-day revenge story.

"Originally our feeling was that cancer wasn't something we wanted to touch in a superhero movie," says Wernick. "Ryan's instinct, which was actually dead on, was that's exactly who Deadpool is and why his attitude is so dark and flippant. That really set the framework for making something that was kind of the anti-superhero movie: about a character who is flawed, who ▷

# BEYOND THE WALL

**DEADPOOL** ENTERS A LONG TRADITION OF AUDIENCE-ADDRESSING CINEMA. HERE ARE FIVE OF OUR FAVOURITE TO-CAMERA WINKS...




**WAYNE'S WORLD** (1992)
After Wayne (Mike Myers, above) and Garth's (Dana Carvey) basement cable show is picked up by a big network, exec Benjamin Oliver (Rob Lowe) insists they include product placement. Cue Wayne mugging wildly to camera showcasing a range of tasty comestibles. "Pepsi, it's the taste of a new generation!*" (* Ask the old generation)

**BLAZING SADDLES** (1974)
Pondering his diabolical plans, Harvey Korman's racist State Attorney Hedy Lamarr ("HEDLEY!") becomes aware of the camera. "If I could find a sheriff who so offends the citizens of Rock Ridge that his very appearance would drive them out of town... But where would I find such a man? Why am I asking you?"

**FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF** (1986)
John Hughes' teen classic gleefully smashes the fourth wall from the very start with Ferris' (Matthew Broderick) instructions to the audience on skipping school. "The key to faking out the parents is the clammy hands. It's a good non-specific symptom."

**GOODFELLAS** (1990)
In a vintage Scorsese final *coup de cinéma* gangster Henry Hill (Ray Liotta), who has been providing a voiceover for most of the movie, climbs off the witness stand and finally addresses the cinema audience directly.

**FUNNY GAMES** (1997)
Michael Haneke's searing critique of violence relies on making the audience complicit in the crimes of his two young psychos (Arno Frisch, Frank Giering), starting with a perfectly judged glance to camera as one sets about slaughtering the victim family's dog. **ADAM SMITH**

# ABSOLUTE SUPERPOWER

**THE DEAD POOL IS A 1988 CLINT EASTWOOD MOVIE. SO WE IMAGINE HOW OTHER CLINT TITLES MIGHT BE REIMAGINED AS COMIC BOOKS**

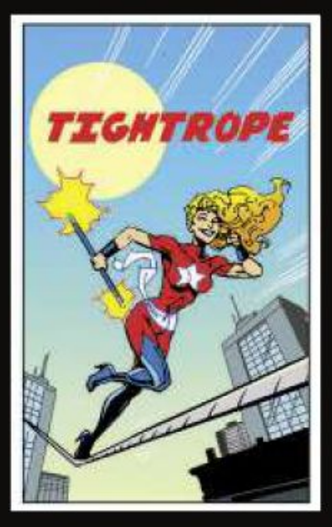
ILLUSTRATIONS **JOHN ROYLE**




### FIREFOX

**The Volcanic Vermin!**

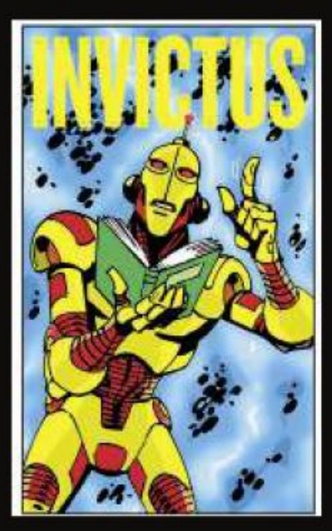
**ORIGIN STORY:** After rooting through a radioactive bin, unassuming urban vermin Scrangus incredibly gained sentience, the power to turn himself into living fox-flame, and the ability to browse the web at will.




### TIGHTROPE

**The High-Wire Crimefighter!**

**ORIGIN STORY:** After accidentally taking a radioactive travel-sickness pill, meek New York barista Eleanor Elminster gained a superhuman sense of balance. Cat burglars beware!




### INVICTUS

**The Unconquerable Soul!**

**ORIGIN STORY:** Created by baleful Professor Maniako to destroy humanity, this indestructible automaton discovered the poetry of William Ernest Henley, declared, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul," and turned to the side of good.




### MILLION DOLLAR BABY

**He Was Born Ready!**

**ORIGIN STORY:** Super-smart mutant Alfie Chubkins is only 13 months old. But after playing the markets, he's become an evil-smiting trillionaire who wears a giant killer teddy-bear suit. Which changes his nappy when he shits himself. DAN JOLIN







kills people for a living, who has cancer and then gets saved by this mutation introduced by Ajax (*the film's antagonist, played by Ed Skrein*), but is horribly scarred in the process. It set the tone for a fresh new take on the genre."

Crevello was also responsible for introducing Reynolds to Tim Miller in 2011. The fiftysomething first-time director may seem like a late-starter, but he's been a significant name in visual effects and animation circles since the mid-'90s, through his co-ownership of the renowned VFX studio Blur. His short film *Gopher Broke* was nominated for an Oscar in 2005, and he personally oversaw the stunning title sequence for David Fincher's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*.

"Drew had seen and liked my work and wanted to work with me," Miller tells us. "He said as a first-time director he probably couldn't get me anything big, but they had this other thing... Coincidentally I had already read the script because it had been leaked online, so I knew it was fucking awesome. I was a fan already."

Crevello has since moved on to become Senior Vice President of movie production at Warner Bros., but he remains an uncredited "angel on *Deadpool*'s shoulder", in Reese's words. Other benefactors include Fincher and James Cameron (with whom Miller worked on *Avatar*), who both read the *Deadpool* screenplay and put in a good word or two at Fox along the way.

Having immediately hit it off with Reynolds, Miller's next job was to prove himself to the studio. The application process saw Miller and Reynolds working on an entirely CG test reel (for which Reynolds provided motion capture): a proof of concept presenting a bullet-spraying action sequence that, remounted in live action, remains almost shot-for-shot intact in the final film. It wasn't intended for public viewing, but someone leaked the test reel online during the summer of 2014, to a blast of audience approval and a sudden scramble of new activity. Nobody admits responsibility: "Rhett and I actually discussed it but we don't have the technological savvy," laughs Wernick.

"That test footage is absolutely the reason I got to come back," Reynolds states. "When it leaked I just saw it online like everybody else, and I was like, 'Wow, where did that come from after all this time?' The studio finally saw what they had and that there was a massive appetite for the character and his sensibilities. And they saw it was me up there, so they thought they might as well brush me off and put me in the red tights."

**DURING ALL THESE YEARS** with Deadpool, Ryan Reynolds has become so close to his character that many of his crew and co-stars insist that he simply *is* Wade Wilson. "He's a natural comic and wise-ass," says T. J. Miller, who plays Deadpool's sidekick, Weasel. "Really silly, quick and bizarre."

On set, Reynolds' ownership of the role, at least, is obvious. Far from putting his feet up between takes, he's deep in the creative process with his director and writers. "Tim, Rhett, Paul and I are all there moving the creative ball down the field," he says. "It's all about being on that team together."

Today's scene is a case in point, with the set-up to Reynolds and Javier's floor-gore scrap taking shape as *Empire* watches. Wilson's cancer-cure odyssey has brought him to this dubious clinic in Guadalajara, where he lurks in a crumbling doorway until he rumbles the scam and reveals his presence to Javier's dodgy doc. As originally written and shot, Javier



Deadpool is famed for having the gift of the gab, but his way with words is far from his only weapon.



Gina Carano as mutant Angel Dust, blessed with superhuman strength.

attacks Reynolds on sight. But Reynolds is uncomfortable with the doctor's motivation, and as work on the scene progresses, it's rejigged so that Wilson provokes the subsequent scrap.

Tim Miller may joke that the writers have done nothing but play *Angry Birds* during the shoot, but having them always to hand is clearly valuable. They divide their time between the live set and a freezing room around a corner, with a lone video monitor and a broken window.

"Your article should be about the mistreatment of writers in Hollywood," chuckles Wernick.

"I need new writers," growls Miller, striding past. "This thing is like a fucking Mexican soap opera."

One of the major difficulties in corralling *Deadpool*'s chaos, all agree, has been where to draw the line, particularly in the case of the character's signature tic: the way he knows he's a character in a comic book and speaks to the reader.

"Does he now know he's a comic-book character in a comic-book movie?" Miller asks us, rhetorically. "Does he know that Ryan Reynolds is playing him, and that Ryan Reynolds also played Green Lantern? It's a big rabbit hole, and we explore it pretty deep." He says the one rule he did impose and abide by was that Deadpool is only self-referential after his power-imbuing surgery. "Deadpool breaks the fourth wall. Wade Wilson never does."

The grimness of today's scene notwithstanding, there's a palpable sense of excitement buzzing throughout the set. Reese and Wernick say they're feeling a similar vibe of something special being in motion to that they felt on *Zombieland*. Miller says it's the best first experience as a director that he could possibly have imagined, despite joking that his management style is "exposed vulnerability, with all these seasoned technical pros being really very generous about me not knowing what the fuck I'm doing."

Reynolds, meanwhile, continues to pinch himself. "We got to make the film! It's a shoestring budget for this type of movie; not at all the money you'd expect from the *X-Men* franchise. But we got to make it the way we wanted to make it."

Having waited this long, he's now in it for the duration. If you needed any further evidence of his commitment, there's also the fact that he has to sit through four hours of make-up to bury his leading-man looks under Deadpool's grotesque scars (when they're not buried under the mask, which will be CGI-enhanced in the finished film). "It's worth it; I'm not complaining," he smiles. "Once you're in it you just make the process enjoyable." Just as well, since he'll have to go through that process many more times if future Deadpool movies materialise.

A sequel has yet to be announced, but there is speculation that the summer 2017 release date originally earmarked by Fox for a follow-up to Josh Trank's unloved *Fantastic Four* may now be filled by a *Deadpool 2*. Beyond that, Reese and Miller think there's a likelihood that Wade Wilson will find himself appearing elsewhere in the X-movie universe. It's hard to imagine how he'd belong there in its current form, but with Hugh Jackman retiring as Wolverine after his next solo outing, and the trilogy begun by *X-Men: First Class* concluding in 2016 with *Apocalypse*, all bets for the future of the X-franchise are currently off.

"This film certainly works within the context of the *X-Men* universe," Reynolds teases, "but it doesn't necessarily include the sensibilities of an *X-Men* movie. It's like taking an *X-Men* character, pumping him full of LSD and then releasing him back into that fold." Where Wilson fits (or doesn't) in the wider series is something he says *Deadpool* actually touches on, "in our own very brief, glib way..."

After 11 years, it seems, we're still only at the beginning. E

***DEADPOOL* IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 4 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**

Ryan Reynolds, photographed exclusively for *Empire* in Los Angeles on July 23, 2015.

# HERO FOR HIRE

## FROM WANNABE COMEDY-BIT-PARTER TO COMIC BOOK-MOVIE STAR AND PRODUCER... EVEN RYAN REYNOLDS ISN'T SURE HOW IT HAPPENED

WORDS
OWEN WILLIAMS

PHOTOGRAPHY
ART STREIBER

**"MY CAREER DIDN'T** exactly pan out the way I'd imagined," says Ryan Reynolds. Normally you'd expect an admission like this to preface a tale of disappointment and recrimination. Yet with Reynolds it's quite the opposite. He's more surprised than anybody at a 25-year career trajectory that's led to him taking the position of star (and producer) of what promises to be one of the boldest, craziest blockbusters of 2016. "When I moved to LA when I was 18 years old," he says, "I genuinely just wanted to play the wacky next-door neighbour on a sitcom."

It has, in his own words, been a "weird road". Born into a crowded household in Vancouver on October 23, 1976, Reynolds was the youngest of four brothers. His father was a food wholesaler and his mother worked in retail; it's not like there's any showbiz in his blood. It all feels a long way from where he is now. And yet *Deadpool*, thanks to its set location, sees him back on his old Vancouver stomping ground. He still calls it home — although he now also shares a pad in New York with his wife, Blake Lively, and their one year-old daughter — and it's from here that he catches up with *Empire* for an engaging but determinedly self-effacing chat which happens towards the end of post-production on *Deadpool*.

"I wasn't particularly interested in acting," he says of his initial, successful try-out for the Canadian teen soap *Hillside*. "The show had come to town and done a cattle call and I just went along. I thought it was a great way to get out of the house." It kept him occupied for two-and-a-half years, despite barely paying: "I'm not kidding, I literally still had a paper route at the same time. I used to get my brother to cover for me if I was on set."

Roles in higher-profile shows followed (he died before the opening titles in a third-season *X-File* and played a couple of separate parts in different seasons of *The Outer Limits*), but he puts this down to Canada's small pool of acting talent. "Those were the local shows that were shot in Vancouver or Alberta. It wasn't a matter of *if* I was going to do those shows; it was just *when* they ran out of other actors. If you're an actor in Vancouver you eventually get the call."

As he emerged from adolescence he went to college "for a second", and drove a forklift truck as the acting dried up. Then, on a whim, along with fellow Vancouver actor Chris William Martin, he decided to pack his bags and head for Los Angeles. "Ideally I had the idea of ▷

joining (*legendary improv troupe*) The Groundlings," he reveals, but says he didn't have the necessary comic "reflexes" and anyway, he was out of money and needed a more reliable gig. "I begged an agent to send me out on five auditions, swearing to God I'd get one of them," he says. "Somehow I made good on that."

**THE PART REYNOLDS** landed was as pretty-boy med-student Michael 'Berg' Bergen for four seasons of the ABC sitcom *Two Guys, A Girl And A Pizza Place*, which opened the door to roles in comedy movies of varying quality, and eventual success with the title role of the jackass-with-a-heart-of-gold in National Lampoon's gross-out comedy *Van Wilder: Party Liaison*. But instead of this beginning a string of frattish comedies (Reynolds didn't even star in either *Van Wilder* sequel), his comedic spark won him the role of quippy vampire killer Hannibal King in *Blade: Trinity*.

It was here his transformation into an action star began: not just because *Blade* indirectly led to *Deadpool*, but also because of the three-month gym regime that first chiselled Reynolds' already slim physique into a lean and muscular shape. There was also the fact that, intentionally or not, he upstaged leading man Wesley Snipes, much to the star's annoyance, if reports are to be believed. Which, Reynolds insist, they shouldn't. "Contrary to what people like to say in the media it was amazing working with Wesley," he says, before adding mischievously, "He embodied every fibre of that character..."

Once again, though, Reynolds defied expectation. Freshly buffed, he could have carried Hannibal's guns and blades into any number of big-budget action vehicles... but he didn't want to. "I refused so many leading-man parts," he says, "because I was still always looking for that eccentric next-door neighbour." In action terms, only Deadpool kept his attention — superheroes don't get much more eccentric — and retreated into quirkier projects and ensemble casts, with the likes of *Smokin' Aces* and *Fireflies In The Garden*. Until, that is, director Martin Campbell came knocking, looking for someone to front up Warner Bros.' mega-budget summer tentpole *Green Lantern*.

For most actors, taking the lead in something of that scale would have been a no-brainer. But Reynolds paused for thought. In many ways *Green Lantern* is the anti-*Deadpool*: clean-cut, cosmic and optimistic in the way that the heroes of Marvel-rival DC often tended to be. And green, of course, rather than red. Yet the



**Top to bottom:** As CIA agent Matt Weston in 2012's *Safe House*; Rodrigo Cortés' acclaimed *Buried* (2010); Comic-book movie #1, *Green Lantern* (2011); His first turn at Deadpool in 2009's *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

years of "cyclical studio hell" with his pet project had taken their toll, and besides, he was flattered. Then, of course, it flopped, grossing only $220 million worldwide against a $200-million production budget.

"That's the only time I've traversed into that mega-budget territory," he reflects now, "and it was a slightly terrifying place to be. You really need a visionary behind a movie like that, but it was the classic studio story: 'We have a poster, but we don't have a script or know what we want; let's start shooting!'"

It was, he says, "frustrating", but the clarity of hindsight doesn't make him wish he'd turned it down. He met his wife on that production plus, he insists, "It afforded me a lot of opportunities." Reynolds is seemingly bulletproof when it comes to box-office disappointments. It's not that he hasn't had them. It's just that by the time the numbers come in he's already onto the next thing, which is as likely to be something leftfield as mainstream, such as 2015's *The Voices*, in which he plays an accidentally murderous stalker with a menagerie of talking pets. He's also played believably against a string of heavyweight co-stars, displaying seemingly zero ego about other names appearing above his own in the cast. "Are you kidding?" he laughs. "I love it when the responsibility's on someone else's ass!"

**THE PRESSURE OF THE** A-list is hardly something Reynolds covets. It's this, in many ways, which makes him the perfect Deadpool — it makes him fearless. It's telling that one of his favourite movies is Rodrigo Cortés' *Buried*, which takes place entirely inside a box and has a (non-voice-only) cast of one: Reynolds. "We felt like explorers in a way," he says of that film. "We were doing something that was basically impossible and people had exactly zero expectations for it. And we did something pretty amazing." It was quite an achievement: an 'inaction movie' that managed to draw maximum thrills from its restricted set-up.

But don't try and get him to draw a pattern from his choices. "Roles are roles," shrugs Reynolds. "I don't have a design for my career at all. I imagine that would just be incredibly frustrating! My choices are typically character-driven parts where you're not requiring an audience to specifically love or hate you, and you're getting an opportunity to do a little bit more and have a little bit more fun."

He brushes off *Empire*'s suggestion that he's a character actor operating at the level of a lead. "When you do a lot of different things, people sometimes confuse 'character actor' with just 'actor'." He has a point. He isn't a performer who disappears into a role. There's an extent to which he's always Ryan Reynolds.

And for the immediate future that is the only role he has planned, in a domestic setting in Queensland, Australia, holding the baby while Lively shoots Jaume Collet-Serra's shark thriller *The Shallows*. "It's a great part," he chuckles. "I play the nanny." The wacky nanny next door? "Exactly." E



"A TRULY COMPELLING SLICE OF GANGSTER CINEMA"

★★★★

THE SUN

"TOM HARDY IS ASTONISHING IN A TOWERING DOUBLE PERFORMANCE"

DAN JOLIN, EMPIRE

"UNMISSABLE... A BRITISH CLASSIC"

HUFFINGTON POST BLOG

★★★★★

SUNDAY EXPRESS

★★★★★

MIRROR ONLINE

★★★★

EMPIRE

★★★★

TOTAL FILM

★★★★

TIME OUT

★★★★

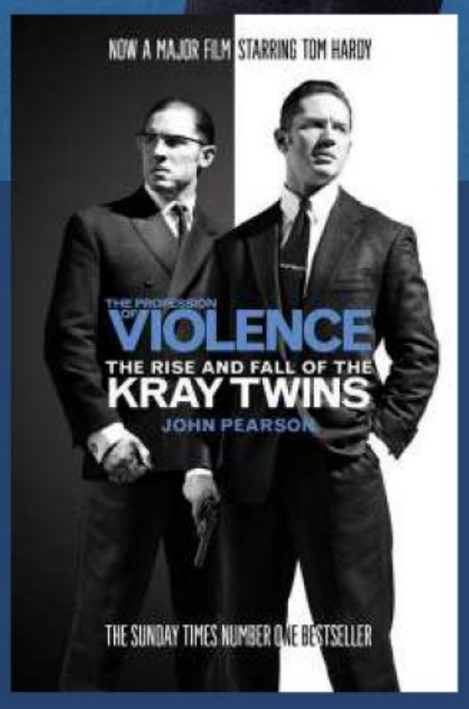
METRO

TOM HARDY TOM HARDY

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THE 2016 PREVIEW

# THE 32 THINGS YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS YEAR



01

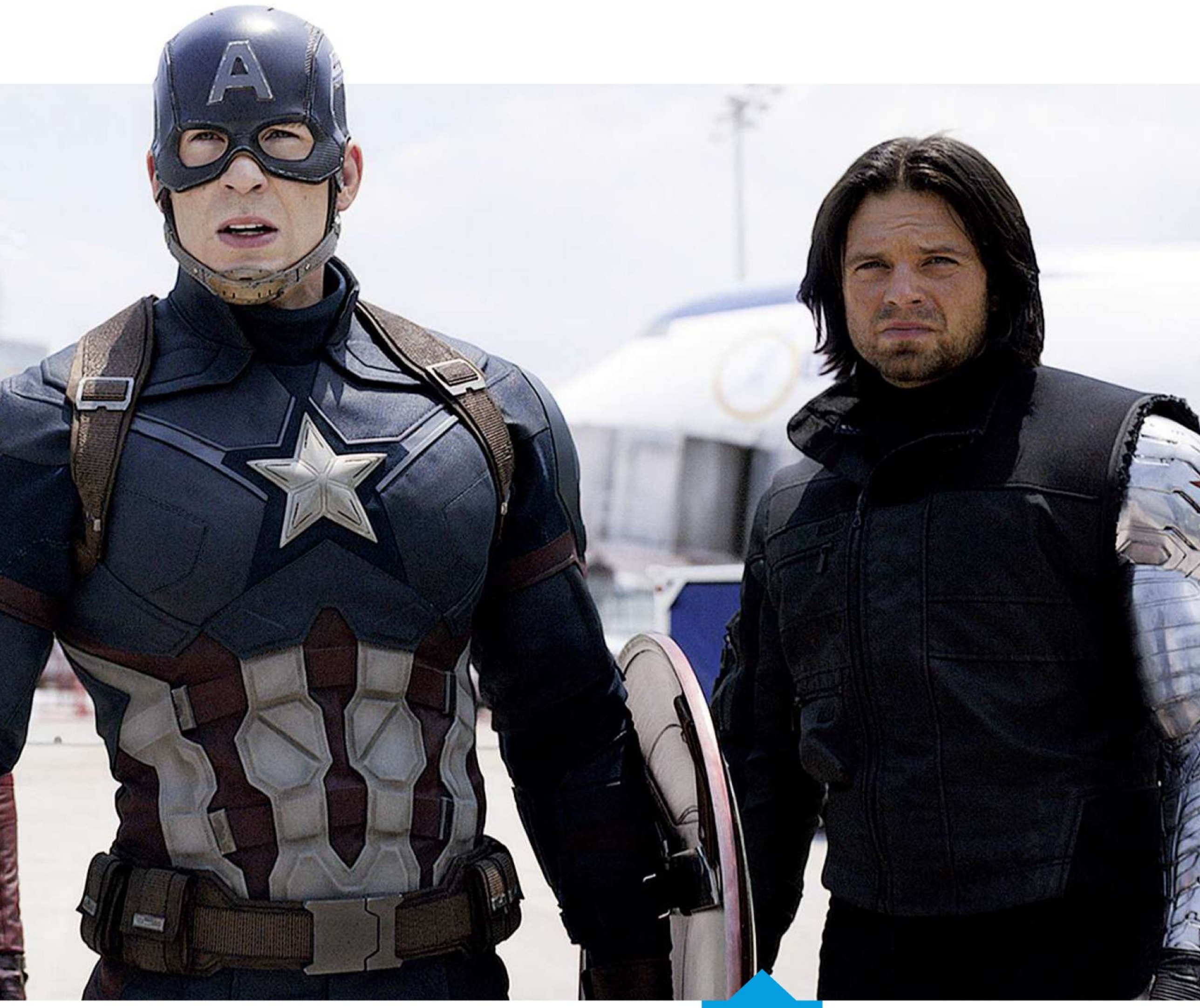
# CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

**THE STAR-SPANGLED MAN BECOMES MARVEL'S MOST SUBVERSIVE HERO YET**

"HE'S QUESTIONING THE chain of command," says Chris Evans of his third outing as Captain America. "He's always taken orders, but I think, especially after *Captain America 2*, he feels that while he's not perfect, the safest hands are still his own."

Steve Rogers has come a long way from the frail kid who couldn't wait to join up in 2011's *The First Avenger*, and eagerly fought for the American way. In fact, the Marvel Cinematic Universe's straightest arrow has, over the course of his five movie appearances, become its most interesting antihero. To Evans, it's all to do with the changing nature of his foes, who keep moving closer to home.

"This is one of the first times Steve



Jeremy Renner as Hawkeye, Elizabeth Olsen as the Scarlet Witch, Chris Evans' Captain and Sebastian Stan's Winter Soldier.

doesn't know what side he's on or what the right answer is," he says, with a hint of relish at Cap's dilemma. "With the first *Captain America*, I think we can all agree that Nazis are bad. The aliens [in *Avengers Assemble*] are no good either; we can all get on board with that notion. This conflict is more mirroring that which we deal with on a daily basis, where it's just different points of view. There's no clear right, no clear wrong, and it's hard for him to understand what the right move is."

It's a stormy new dawn for a hero whose true superpower has always been his unswerving moral certainty. But by putting this black-and-white guy in a profoundly grey situation, directors Joe and Anthony Russo hope to reach new dramatic heights for the MCU — assuming they don't tear it apart first.

After the events of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, this story sees the world deciding to regulate superheroes through an international agency. Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), still guilt-ridden after his Ultron experiment went so catastrophically wrong, wholly supports the plan. But Rogers is more conflicted, especially with his old friend Bucky, aka the Winter Soldier (Sebastian Stan), being called to account for his violent, brainwashed past.

Marvel's heroes have squabbled before, even fallen out, but this is a full-on face-off, splitting the Avengers down the middle, with newcomers like Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther only adding fuel to the fire. "There's collateral damage to the action we've taken, and there's going to be people with different points of view to ours who cause us to regret our actions," says Evans. "Black Panther has a certain cachet and class, so to have him come down the way he does, it provides the audience with someone to identify with."

There's going to be considerable emotional heft behind the super-powered punch-ups. Steve is desperate to protect Bucky, reluctant to trust his fate to another possibly corrupt agency, and wary of Tony's newfound sense of civic responsibility. Essentially, says Evans, "he is questioning whether his allegiance should be to anyone other than his own will." And that will lead Captain America all the way from patriot to rebel. **HOH**

**IN CINEMAS: APRIL 29**



02

# GAME OF THRONES

**WE SAW SNOW FALL. BUT WILL WE SEE SNOW RISE AGAIN IN SEASON 6?**

FROM THE BEHEADING OF Ned to the multiple stabbing of Jon by his Night's Watch brothers at the conclusion of the last season, death is such an integral feature of *Game Of Thrones* it may as well be credited as a main character. And, with the single, notable exception of minor player Beric Dondarrion, it's always been permanent. "Dead means dead," showrunners David Benioff and Dan Weiss have insisted. Yet nobody could accept the Stark reality that we'd never see Kit Harington frowning in black leather again.

Almost immediately after the credits rolled on Season 5 finale *Mother's Mercy* on June 15, all eyes were on the actor, and especially his lustrous mop of hair, which he'd once promised he'd hack off once he was done Snowing. First he was snapped at Wimbledon with his 'do still in Jon-style. Then there were repeated spottings of him, locks billowing freely, in Belfast, where the *Thrones* shoot is based. Relief was expressed, and debate and conjecture began (has he popped his consciousness into his direwolf, significantly named Ghost? Will red sorceress Melisandre use her sexy fire-magic to bring him back, *à la* Dondarrion?). Forget Who Shot J.R.?. This is no whodunnit. It's a howwilltheyundoit?

Then, finally, on November 23, HBO released the first Season 6 poster: a shot of Jon, his face spattered artfully with blood. Is it meant as a reminder, or a hint? Benioff and Weiss won't say, but they have admitted to *Empire* they do enjoy teasing their audience: "That type of poster is actually referred to as a teaser, so there you go..."

Of course, there is far more to anticipate this season than Jon's likely resurrection. Lena Headey's Cersei will be going on trial; Bran (Isaac Hempstead Wright), last seen meeting a strange old tree-man in Season 4, will return; the Viking-esque Greyjoys will muscle back in on the action; while Daenerys' (Emilia Clarke) troublesome dragons have now, we've learned from VFX supervisor Joe Bauer, doubled in size.

Much like the scale of the show itself, say Benioff and Weiss, who are still busy on the sixth series and forever feeling in need of a nap. "This season has been the most difficult one for everyone in the crew. While we once complained about the hardship of shooting two units a day, this year we've been shooting four units a day for close to two months. Everybody's tired, cold and grumpy. Basically we've all joined the Night's Watch. But the good news is that this season has also shaped up to be both our most intimate and our most spectacular." **DJ**

Kit Harington's Jon Snow after being stabbed by his fellow Night's Watchmen in the Season 5 finale.

**ON SKY ATLANTIC: APRIL TBC**



03

# HAIL, CAESAR!

## INTRODUCING GEORGE CLOONEY AS THE COEN BROTHERS' LATEST "AMERICAN IDIOT"

"IT'S FUNNY," SAYS JOEL COEN, WHO FINDS MANY things funny, "on the last day of shooting on [*Burn After Reading*] Ethan said, 'That's a wrap!' And George said, 'Okay, I've played my last idiot!'"

Following *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (idiot con on the lam) and *Intolerable Cruelty* (idiot divorce-belt lawyer falls for client), *Burn After Reading* (idiot security specialist proves to be a pervert) was supposed to conclude what George Clooney classifies as his "American Idiot trilogy".

More fool you, Mr. Clooney. It turns out those clever-clogs Coens had another idiot on the back-burner, and he couldn't resist. Baird Whitlock must surely be the apotheosis of witless dreamboats Clooney has played on behalf of his sniggering employers. For this idiot is an actor.

In glorious-looking, '50s-set ensemble Hollywood caper *Hail, Caesar!*, the kidnapping of *dummkopf* matinée idol Whitlock midway through a cornball Roman epic (the *Hail, Caesar!* within *Hail, Caesar!*) will set the plot into motion. In particular, sending



George Clooney as matinée idol Baird Whitlock.

God-fearing studio fixer and bumbling shamus Eddie Mannix (Josh Brolin) in lukewarmish pursuit of the missing jackass.

At the heart of Clooney's ongoing willingness to send himself up is a charmingly judged calibration of comic tone (notice how Whitlock is as obsessed with his pearly whites as Miles Massey is in *Intolerable Cruelty*). It was a lesson learned on his first day on *O Brother* while John Goodman hit him on the head with a stick. "I was playing it like an idiot because these are the stupidest guys in America, and Joel and Ethan walked over and said, 'Listen, you're the smartest guy in the room in every single scene...'" Above all, an idiot never knows he is an idiot. **IN**

**IN CINEMAS: FEBRUARY 26**



04

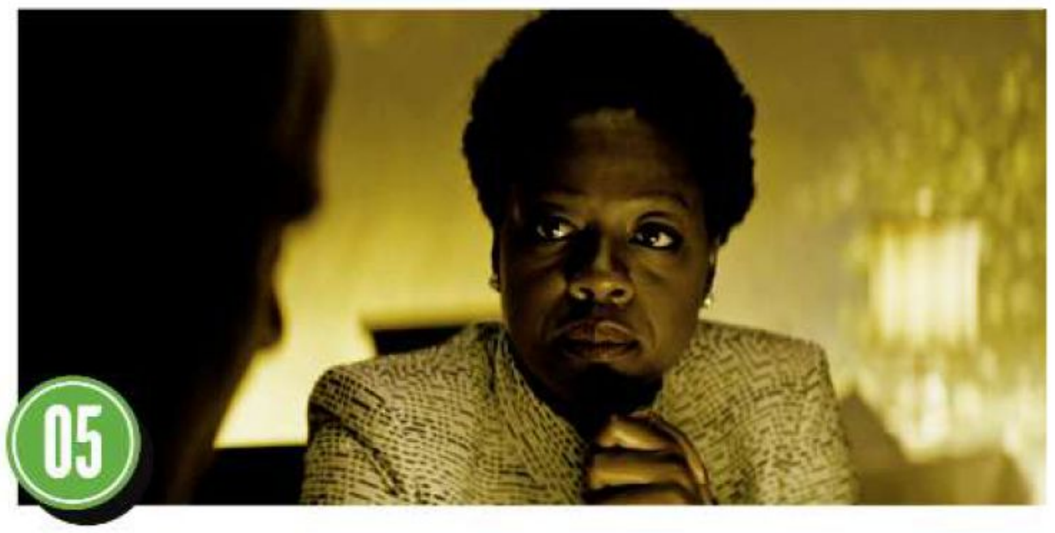
# THE WITCH

## NO HATS, NO WARTS, JUST PURE TERROR

A NEWBORN VANISHES FROM A Puritan farm. Has he been gobbled up by a witch? Or is something else feeding his family's paranoia? Set in New England in the 1630s, the year's most anticipated horror has been rattling festival audiences since its Sundance debut. It's an exquisitely nasty experience that recasts the wart-nosed, pointy-hatted crone into a figure of supreme, ambiguous dread.

"Before they were taken over by Disney, fairy tales tapped into something far more primal," says writer/director Robert Eggers. "I wanted to reclaim the witch as something terrifying, exotic and unfamiliar. The weird shit in the movie wasn't made up — it's all based on research." Some have dubbed his debut feature *The Shining* meets *The Crucible*. The film was inspired by Eggers' own childhood nightmares and has already given grown-ups the thrashing night-terrors. Expect a true horror anomaly. **SC**

**IN CINEMAS: MARCH 11**



05

# SUICIDE SQUAD

## MEET THEIR SECRET WEAPON: AMANDA WALLER

FROM THE JOKER TO KILLER Croc, *Suicide Squad* will feature more bad eggs than a coop for evil chickens. But even though she's not a colourful, crazed super-villain, power-suited schemer Amanda Waller will hold her own against them all. So when Viola Davis was offered the role she said, "Yes." Then, "Who?" She talked about the character with her "comic-book-zealot friends... The three things that kept coming up were, 'Hard. No humour. Sociopathic.' And that's when I started getting nervous!"

In the MCU, Nick Fury is the Avengers' ringleader. Waller is DC's answer: equally tough, but far less noble, her sights set on wrangling incarcerated metahumans for her devious ends. And she's unafraid to get her hands dirty. "I can't reveal how I got this," Davis grins, waving a freshly scarred pinkie at *Empire*. "But I did go a bit overboard in the sociopathic realm, controlling a certain character..." **NDS**

**IN CINEMAS: AUGUST 5**



06

# ASSASSIN'S CREED

**THE FREE-RUNNING ACTION SPECTACULAR SET TO BREAK THE VIDEO-GAME MOVIE CURSE**

SINCE BOB HOSKINS FIRST brandished a sink plunger in 1993's *Super Mario Bros.*, video-game adaptations have been an unsightly blemish on the face of modern cinema. In two decades, not one game, irrespective of quality or following, has turned out a truly great movie (though 2001's *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* was a hit), but we'd bet all the gold coins in Bowser's castle that 2016 is the year that will finally change.

Following Duncan Jones' *Warcraft* (see page 93), *Assassin's Creed* is the second member of gaming's royal family going from monitor to big screen over the coming months. Reuniting Justin Kurzel with *Macbeth* leads Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard, it's an adaptation of Ubisoft's roof-hopping murder franchise, known for its cinematic storytelling and striking recreation of classical periods.

Kurzel's film takes the game's intertwining-timelines approach, placing Fassbender in both the contemporary garb of protagonist Callum Lynch and the cowled robes of his 15th-century ancestor, Aguilar. Set against the backdrop of a centuries-old feud between the secret order of Assassins and the equally shadowy Templars, the film has Lynch re-living the exploits of his Assassin forbear thanks to a DNA-probing VR machine called the Animus.

The set-up may be heavy on sci-fi hokum but the framing device allows for parallel tales with contrasting aesthetics: near-future technology set against the brocaded finery and Renaissance architecture of Inquisition-era Spain.

And then there's the action. The franchise is famous not just for stealthy wetwork but precision-choreographed battles and dizzying acts of parkour. Assassins flow across rooftops, bounding from steeple to spire before diving back to earth (often via a handily placed pile of







**Above:** Michael Fassbender as 15th-century Aguilar. **Left:** Fassbender as modern-day Callum.

hay). It makes for exhilarating gameplay and has the potential to make a similarly breath-catching spectacle on the screen.

Though it's the second Ubisoft game to be adapted (after *Prince Of Persia* in 2010), *Assassin's Creed* is the first from the newly formed Ubisoft Motion Pictures. Taking a leaf out of Marvel's playbook, the developer has extended creative control over the project to ensure it doesn't suffer the same ignominious fate as its predecessor. But with Jeremy Irons and Brendan Gleeson also in the talent line-up, a director and his leads fresh from making one of the best-ever Shakespeare movies, and the most cinematic game series around as its source material, this has more than just a concealed blade up its sleeve. In the fight to prove that games can cross the interactive divide, Duncan Jones leads the charge, but Kurzel looks set to strike the killing blow. **JD**

**IN CINEMAS: DECEMBER TBC**



07

# DOCTOR STRANGE

## BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH JOINS THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE — AS ITS WEIRDEST HERO YET

KEVIN FEIGE, GRAND Poobah of Marvel Studios, remembers the first time he met Benedict Cumberbatch. It was a workaday meeting, the sort he schedules with dozens of directors and actors every year, to discuss potential opportunities. "After he left," recalls Feige of Cumberbatch, "Stephen Broussard (*executive producer*) and I looked at each other and said, 'I think Doctor Strange was just here.'"

A few years later, Cumberbatch has managed to find time in his hectic schedule to star as former doctor Stephen Strange. "He's an arrogant neurosurgeon in Manhattan, living a very opulent lifestyle," explains Feige. "He gets into a horrible car accident and his hands, the tools by which he can do amazing surgeries, are mangled and destroyed. That starts his downward path, and that's why Benedict is such a great choice — you can go to the highest heights and lowest lows with him and he won't lose you."

A brilliant but arrogant bloke with a goatee has his life changed by a near-death experience and becomes a superhero… So far, so Tony Stark. But Feige is convinced that *Doctor Strange* marks a new chapter for Marvel. "It couldn't be any more different than any of the films that have come before it," he says. It will also be a seriously weird chapter, as the troubled Strange travels to Kathmandu to find a cure for his hands, and winds up taking a crash course in the mystic arts that leads him to become Earth's Sorcerer Supreme, the last line of defence against inter-dimensional beasties. "There are more things that lurk in shadows in this movie, perhaps, than our other movies," says Feige.

Although horror veteran Scott Derrickson is directing, don't expect it to be Marvel's darkest movie yet. "We see glimpses of something called the Dark Dimension," says Feige, "but if you were to open a *Doctor Strange* comic drawn by Steve Ditko, you would see the Dark Dimension is, in fact, very colourful in an extremely psychedelic way. Those are the things we're not shying away from." **CH**

**IN CINEMAS: OCTOBER 28**

08

# THE JUNGLE BOOK

## A MOST WANTED MAN-CUB

ON THE LOS ANGELES set of Disney's live-action take on *The Jungle Book*, ten year-old Neel Sethi is a lone analogue presence in an otherwise entirely digital world. "It's overwhelming!" says Neel, but he could have fooled us. Playing jungle boy Mowgli may have kept him away from his parents' Manhattan home for the past six months, but as he bounces enthusiastically along the length of a small runway of real jungle foliage (which will later be inserted into a 360-degree virtual wilderness), there's little sign that he's homesick. He's taken to his feature debut like a bear takes to the woods.

Remaking a 50 year-old beloved classic and reshaping it for a modern audience is no easy task, but director Jon Favreau was clear in his ambitions: to go beyond the kiddie movie that Walt Disney made, maintain the charm and relationships that everyone loves, and do it in a fresh enough way to justify a remake. Central to realising those ambitions was casting his human hero, and with a traditional casting call he auditioned more than 2,000 kids in Los Angeles, New York, Canada, India, Australia and the UK. Despite having never acted in a feature film before, the super-confident Sethi wanted to audition for one simple reason: he really liked *The Jungle Book*. Fortunately, Favreau really liked Sethi.

"There was a certain quality we wanted, and we knew he was going to have to carry the film," says the director. "So it was going to have to be somebody that had a certain charisma, a certain charm and certain qualities that I remember from the cartoon." For Favreau, those qualities included playfulness, athleticism and, most importantly, a fierce intelligence. "I always like smart actors,"



Neel Sethi as Mowgli with Raksha (voiced by Lupita Nyong'o).

he says. "Intelligence is the one quality that unifies all the actors I like to watch — they make interesting, smart choices." On set, watching young Sethi command the attention of all who are caught in his whirlwind of energy, it's obvious that it's Favreau who's made the smart choice.

"When he did his read, I just smiled," says the director. Despite the A-list calibre of his mocapped co-stars (including Scarlett Johansson as Kaa, Christopher Walken as King Louie, Idris Elba as Shere Khan and Bill Murray as Baloo), our money is on the ten-year-old providing the film's stand-out performance. TH

**IN CINEMAS: APRIL 15**



09

# THE WALKING DEAD

## THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE GETS EVEN MORE DEADLY

"RELENTLESS. HEARTBREAKING." Asked to sum up the second half of Season 6 in six words, *The Walking Dead* director and FX supremo Greg Nicotero does it in just two. But we can do it in one: Negan.

Having been introduced to an unimpressed Daryl (Norman Reedus) by members of his crew, The Saviors, in the mid-season finale post-credits sequence, Negan, played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan, will be dishing out a large portion of that heartbreak with his bespoke barbed-wire-wrapped baseball bat, Lucille, at some point during the season. Not since The Governor has the arrival of a villain been this keenly anticipated, the sense of dread only intensified by the comic-book character's 'fondness' for Carl (Chandler Riggs), and his brutal murder of a core character. Nicotero is tight-lipped about specifics, but does admit, "If you read the comic book you kind of know we're climbing towards a major death..." JN

**ON FOX: FEBRUARY TBC**



10

# GHOSTBUSTERS

## THE (SEMI)-CONTROVERSIAL REBOOT

"I WANTED TO BE A GHOSTBUSTER when I was a kid," says Melissa McCarthy. "I guess I didn't think about the fact that those four just happened to be men." Well, since it was revealed that the quartet of 'busters in Paul '*Bridesmaids*' Feig's take on the 1986 hit would all be female comedians (McCarthy joined by Kristen Wiig, Leslie Jones and Kate McKinnon), that fact's been given a lot of thought. Or maybe 'thought' isn't quite the right word: "*Ghostbusters* is now a chick flick WTF" was the kind of response that typified the initial social-media backlash. While frustrating for Feig and his actors, the casting has given the long-dormant franchise an awakening that simply wouldn't have been achieved by just updating with new-gen male leads. Not to mention the obvious: as Feig puts it, "It's really just about these being four of the funniest people I know, and that's all I cared about." TW

**IN CINEMAS: JULY 15**



11

# DAREDEVIL

**NETFLIX AND MARVEL ARE UPPING THE ANTIHERO WITH TWO NEW CHARACTER ADDITIONS**

PERHAPS IT WAS WHEN a guy committed suicide by impaling his face on a spike. Or the scene when the villain decapitated someone by repeatedly slamming their head in a car door. Either way, it was quickly clear that Netflix and Marvel's *Daredevil* was a very different kettle of super-powered fish from Marvel Studios' cinematic output.

*Daredevil* brilliantly (or should that be darkly?) established the tone of this small-screen strand of the universe that has since included *Jessica Jones*, with *Luke Cage* to come later in 2016. Its lead, Charlie Cox's Matt Murdock, wasn't a quip-happy, cape-wearing hero but a brooding vigilante, whose unique blend of a desire for justice and deep-rooted Catholic guilt compelled him to become the ultimate contradiction: a crusading lawyer by day, a take-no-prisoners crimefighter by night. It was a huge success, complex and brutal.

As The Man Without Fear embarks on his sophomore season, his nemesis, Vincent D'Onofrio's Wilson Fisk, is behind bars, Matt Murdock has fully embraced that snazzy red costume, and happiness may be rearing its beautiful head. "Things are working out," says Cox. "Season 1 was about him debating with himself about what he was doing, whether it was right or wrong, but now he's found a place in his heart for Daredevil."

But happiness is never on the agenda for long in Hell's Kitchen. Breaking Matt's reverie are two new characters: first there's Jon Bernthal as the fourth screen incarnation of cop-turned-vigilante Frank Castle, aka The Punisher. One of Marvel's most popular characters, Castle's 'shoot all the bad guys' ethos is diametrically opposed to Daredevil's 'spill 'em, don't kill 'em' strategy. "It's really complicated," says Cox. "It feels like they're sworn enemies, but at times it feels like they could be best friends and brothers. In order to find common ground, compromise has to be made."

Charlie Cox is Matt Murdock, AKA Daredevil.

Then there's Elodie Yung as Matt's old college flame Elektra Natchios, who just happens to be a world-class ninja assassin. "I think every single man has an Elektra in their past," laughs Cox, who has clearly had a more interesting dating history than *Empire*. "If you imagine that relationship, a very fiery, very lustful, very loving and hating relationship, and then you add to that two people who know serious martial arts, you're going to have an interesting dynamic..." CH

**ON NETFLIX: MARCH TBC**



12

# THE BFG

## STEVEN SPIELBERG AND ROALD DAHL: THE ULTIMATE KIDS' STORYTELLING COMBO

THE YEAR 1982 WAS A LANDMARK ONE FOR classic children's entertainment. Roald Dahl's book *The BFG* and Steven Spielberg's *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* both arrived and defined unforgettable storytelling for an entire generation. Now Spielberg has adapted the former in a meeting of minds that feels just… Right.

"I think one of the things Steven and Roald Dahl have both done is deliver dreams to the world," says producer Frank Marshall. "Steven just seemed the perfect fit for the story of this bond between a little girl and a giant."

*The BFG* spins the story of young orphan Sophie (newbie Ruby Barnhill, cast after a trawl through more than 1,000 kids), who befriends a Big Friendly Giant (*Bridge Of Spies*' Mark Rylance) and sets out to round up the evil man-eating giants with help from the Queen of England (Penelope Wilton). In short, it's the kind of funny, inventive fantasy that screams "A Steven Spielberg Film", given his gift with child actors ("He treats them as a peer," says Marshall), off-the-chart visual imagination and facility with comic relief, all wrapped up in cutting-edge Weta technology used to bring the giants to life.

"I'm not sure that anyone else at this moment could have done this because it was *all* new," says Marshall of the technical demands. "Steven was learning as he went along. I asked him how it was going and he said, 'I'm having a really great time in and amongst my confusion...'" And while Spielberg was breaking new ground on *The BFG*, he was simultaneously putting the finishing touches to his Cold War thriller *Bridge Of Spies*. "I don't know how he went back and forth," marvels Marshall. "Maybe to take his mind off all the craziness he was dealing with on the effects side of *BFG*, he would go work on his straightforward movie. Whatever he did, it worked." IF



Newcomer Ruby Barnhill as Sophie, who encounters the titular Big Friendly Giant.

**IN CINEMAS: JULY 22**



13

# ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

## VII-AND-A-HALF THINGS WE KNOW FOR SURE ABOUT THE FIRST *STAR WARS* SPIN-OFF

I *Rogue One* sits outside of the action in *Episodes VII to IX*, offering a completely different flavour of *Star Wars* story. "It's a slightly grittier story, very emotional," suggests Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy. "Right away, you have a sense of a mission, and it's exciting."

II Suggested by ILM visual effects legend John Knoll, that "mission" is the daring raid by a band of rebels to filch the Death Star plans — the action that sets up *Episode IV*.

III The spin-off has an impressive international cast, including Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen and Ben Mendelsohn.

IV It's directed by Gareth Edwards (*Monsters*), who has admitted that, on being offered the job after he'd exerted so much energy on *Godzilla*, he was initially reluctant to get involved. "I was honestly hoping I'd hate [the script]," he says. "I was like, 'Please be rubbish.'"

V Edwards was convinced by a *Star Wars* film that gets to grips with the messy realities of war in a Jedi-less galaxy. *Rogue One* will inhabit morally grey areas which highlight the true cost of combat.

VI *Godzilla* composer Alexandre Desplat will be picking up the baton from John Williams.

VII It will have a distinct, urgent visual style, unlike J. J. Abrams', with *Zero Dark Thirty* DP Greig Fraser working alongside Edwards. "I think the way Gareth is shooting the film is exciting," says Kennedy. "He has a kind of handheld way in which he wants to tell the story, and it makes it very dynamic. Even though it'll still feel like *Star Wars*, it'll feel very different from *The Force Awakens*."

VII.V Jonathan Aris will play Senator Jebel. Nope, we have no idea who that is either. IF

**IN CINEMAS: DECEMBER 17**

THE 2016 PREVIEW

14

# FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

**PRODUCER DAVID HEYMAN TALKS US THROUGH THIS EXCLUSIVE NEW IMAGE OF THE POTTER UNIVERSE'S LATEST MAGICAL HERO: NEWT SCAMANDER**

## THE CITY

"Our big New York street set (*in Leavesden Studios*) is fantastic. I love things like the laundry and the ladders on the outside of the buildings. There's even real steam that blasts out of the grates. What's funny is that the longer the set has been up, the better it looks. It's been subjected to the weather and just feels more and more real."

## THE CROWD

"The set is big, and it'll be even bigger when you add visual effects to extend it. On some days we've had several hundred extras, all done up in 1920s costumes. One thing I like about this film is that not only are we going into the magical world, but we're bringing the magical characters into the Muggle, or 'Nomaj', world."

## THE CAR

"We've got between 30 and 40 period-appropriate cars, I think. There are some guys who look after them and, for the most part, they work perfectly, but every once in a while there's a moment where they stumble. We had one moment last week, where a car just stopped. But fortunately we have our own RAC here!"

## THE COAT

"This is my first time working with Colleen Atwood, a brilliant costume designer. She's created a fantastic coat that's elegant and has a lovely shape, but also helps Eddie (*Redmayne*) stand out. The whole thing about Newt is he's a bit of an outsider, and when you put this colour in a sea of brown, your eye goes very strongly to him."

**IN CINEMAS: NOVEMBER 18**

## THE CASE

"Newt is a magizoologist who's just completed a global journey to find and document magical creatures for a book he plans on writing. What can I say about his case without revealing too much? It's important, because it contains some of the creatures he's been researching. It may be small, but there's a whole world within."

15

# BRIDGET JONES'S BABY

## REUNITING BRIDGET WITH THE WOMAN WHO GAVE HER LIFE IN THE FIRST PLACE



Bridget (Renée Zellweger) returns, and is as shy and retiring as ever...

WHEN HELEN FIELDING PUBLISHED *MAD ABOUT The Boy* in 2013, another big-screen *Bridget* seemed inevitable. But with (spoiler alert) the devastating demise of Mark Darcy in its pages, and considering the somewhat lukewarm reception to sequel *The Edge Of Reason* back in 2004, it wasn't nailed on to receive a rapturous reception. Until, that is, it was announced that the third film would *not* be an adaptation of the book (phew) — but a brand-new story written by Fielding and David Nicholls set, timeline-wise, somewhere between the final two novels. Bridget is now 43 but still, before becoming pregnant at least, living the same old life, just now armed with an iPad. When *Empire* vists the set in Windsor, we witness a classicly slapstick Bridget scene as she ends up face down in the mud at a music festival before being rescued/hoisted up by the bum of her previously white jeans by Patrick Dempsey, who joins the franchise as her new love interest. Daniel Cleaver may be missing this time, but two important figures from the initial film are very present: Colin Firth as Mark Darcy (who may also be the daddy) and director Sharon Maguire.

"I'm so happy," enthused Renée Zellweger about Maguire's return. "There's nothing better in the whole world than pulling off a silly stunt and hearing her laugh from behind the camera. I always feel that whenever I see her, that the character of Bridget is alive, existing somewhere right between the two of us." TW

**IN CINEMAS: SEPTEMBER 16**



16

# DAVID BRENT: LIFE ON THE ROAD

## IT'S *THE OFFICE* MEETS *THIS IS SPINAL TAP*!

"HE THINKS IT'S SCORSESE following the Rolling Stones around, but it's really, 'Where are they now?'" Writer-director-star Ricky Gervais has brought back his most popular creation, David Brent, in a mock-rockumentary inspired by *This Is Spinal Tap* and *Anvil*. Twelve years after *The Office*, the former Wernham Hogg irritant is a lowly salesman at a toilet supplies company, but he's still clinging to his rock dream. He's cashed in his pension to fund a UK tour by his band Foregone Conclusion, with a documentary crew in tow.

Gervais, who reconnected with his best-loved character during a 2013 Comic Relief appearance and road-tested Foregone Conclusion's songs at sell-out live shows, says that Brent is a more sympathetic character this time: still desperate to be liked, still shooting himself in the foot, still chasing stardom, but further away than ever. "He thinks fame is his friend and it's not," says Gervais. "He's not equipped." DL

**IN CINEMAS: AUGUST 19**



17

# BETTER CALL SAUL

## WILL JIMMY McGILL BE BREAKING GOODMAN?

NOT THAT WE WERE EVER THAT worried, but it was a relief when *Better Call Saul* proved far more than a *Breaking Bad* cash-in. It treated us to more time in Vince Gilligan's tragi-comic alt-Albuquerque and gave us something fresh, too. With the second season, we can settle comfortably into Gilligan and Peter Gould's all-new, long-form portrayal of character descent.

Just as Walter hadn't gone full Heisenberg by the end of *Breaking Bad*'s first season, so we last saw Jimmy McGill (Bob Odenkirk) as, well, Jimmy McGill, still. Albeit a Jimmy who'd resolved to ditch his cumbersome morality and hooked up with grizzled bagman Mike (Jonathan Banks). This season he'll hopefully go full-sleaze, while Gilligan confirmed no-gooders Nacho Varga (Michael Mando) and Tuco (Raymond Cruz) will reappear. But we can also reasonably expect other *Breaking Bad* cameos — perhaps even from Gus Fring... DJ

**ON NETFLIX: FEBRUARY 16**




18

# THE X-FILES

## DAVID DUCHOVNY AND GILLIAN ANDERSON ON THE UNEXPECTED REUNION OF ONE OF TV'S MOST ICONIC DOUBLE ACTS

**How did this new series come together?**
*David Duchovny*: There were many moving parts to it, but I think the pivotal thing that happened was the changing landscape of television. When it became obvious to all of us that we wouldn't have to do a 24-episode season, suddenly it became very feasible.
*Gillian Anderson*: It wasn't something that was remotely interesting to me when it first came into earshot. It took a while to convince me. It wasn't until it became this small, six-episode format that it became a possibility.

**What can you tell us about the new series that won't set off the FBI chip in your brain swearing you to secrecy?**
*Anderson:* As we find Mulder and Scully, they are *not* a couple. They are living separately. Mulder seems to have become a bit reclusive. Scully is working in a hospital, assisting operations. Something triggers a conversation, which then triggers a reunion...

**The *X-Files* universe still holds many unanswered questions. Are any of these answered?**
*Anderson*: I probably wouldn't know how to answer them, even if I was allowed to!
*Duchovny*: I would say, in true *X-Files* fashion, that there are as many questions answered as there are questions raised. There are too many things that people want answers to — it's impossible to satisfy them all in six episodes.
*Anderson*: I think there's definitely stuff in there that will satisfy the fans, on many levels.



*Duchovny*: We wanted to make this as something that stands on its own, not just a response to what we'd done. It didn't make sense to just come back and throw out a couple of winking allusions to the past — "The truth is out there", "I want to believe", and all that — and then cash our pay cheques. We wanted to make a show that is viable *today*. I think the cleverer and more creative venture is to take it into the present.

**When was the last time you watched an episode from the original series?**
*Anderson*: I recently attempted to introduce my two young boys, aged nine and seven, to the mildest episode I could think of. They haven't seen much of my stuff, and I thought it would be a great idea if we watched it together. But, no. It was such a bad idea. They were completely freaked out! It gave them nightmares for weeks...
*Duchovny*: I watched a couple before we started shooting the new series. Before that, it had been a few years, I think.

**How do old episodes hold up for you?**
*Duchovny*: I look back at the *old* old ones, from the beginning, and I'm kind of mortified by my acting... I'm just thankful we didn't get cancelled in our first year.

**Have there been any discussions about the future?**
*Anderson:* Not with the people that make the big decisions, no. It's tricky. I've got kids, I live in London — it's a big deal to go away for that amount of time. I thought the new series would finally bring some closure, but as it turns out, these six episodes don't really! That doesn't mean that it won't be the end. But nothing is set in stone... JNU

**ON CHANNEL 5: EARLY 2016**

**Above:** Duchovny and Anderson with Mitch Pileggi and William B. Davis. **Right:** The FBI duo reunited.



19

# WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING

## DUNCAN JONES COULDN'T BE THINKING BIGGER

"WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS film for such a long time," says Duncan Jones from the *Warcraft* edit suite. "It's coming up on three years now." The *Moon* director's first foray into bronto-budget filmmaking has pushed the limits of his endurance. It has compressed a vast fantasy world ("20 years of *Warcraft* lore") into a franchise-launching script; turned a larger-than-life digital universe into a live-set environment; and half its cast play orcs, which ILM is rendering photo-real based on performance capture. Epic doesn't cover it. Despite an extended schedule thanks to a release clash with *The Force Awakens*, Universal's confidence is clear, with the date moving to the slot occupied by *Jurassic World* in 2015. As the name suggests, this is a film about war on the largest scale, with some literally explosive elements. "[With] the use of magic and the different forms of combat that we have," says Jones, "it's a good, heady mix." DJ

**IN CINEMAS: JUNE 3**



20

# PREACHER

## THE CULT COMIC SET TO STORM THE SMALL SCREEN

A COMIC FEATURING A LIQUOR-swilling vampire (*This Is England*'s Joe Gilgun), a dead-eye markswoman (Ruth Negga) and a possessed Texan priest (Dominic Cooper) on a mission to hunt down God doesn't seem an obvious candidate for one of the greatest ever written. But Garth Ennis' gleefully blasphemous *Preacher* is just that and, after a few false starts, arrives this year via AMC — and, surprisingly, the pens of Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. Those concerned about the *Superbad* guys tackling the material may need reminding that it is, at heart, a black comedy. And they've not been afraid to play around to ensure surprises. "We want to make a show that if you're a fan of the comic, you don't know what to expect," Rogen said. As showrunner Sam Catlin put it, after the pilot was ordered to series, "Can't wait to spend some quality time with vampires, psychopaths, rednecks and God..." JD

**ON TBC: SUMMER TBC**



21

# STAR TREK BEYOND



**FORMER *FAST AND FURIOUS* HELMSMAN JUSTIN LIN JUST HIT WARP SPEED**

JUSTIN LIN DID NOT NEED somebody else's franchise. He already had his own. Having directed four movies in the *Fast And Furious* series, turning it from a solid property into a box-office monster, Lin had no strong desire to go back to being a director for hire. So when J. J. Abrams, who was leaving the *Star Trek* universe to go play with different planets on *Star Wars*, called Lin to offer him the captain's chair, he was reluctant. "I said, 'If you're telling me there's a script [already] that I should go shoot, then I have plenty of other things to do.' J. J. said, 'No, that's not what I want. The only catch is you're going to start shooting in about five-and-a half months.'"

So Lin created his instalment from scratch. A script by Roberto Orci, who co-wrote the first two and was originally in place to direct (hence the short pre-production time), was replaced with a new one started by Simon Pegg (who also plays Scotty) and Doug Jung. Now the film picks up a couple of years after the last, with the Enterprise crew deep into their exploration of other worlds. And where Abrams' movies were largely focused on the relationship between Kirk and Spock, Lin wants to dig into the larger group dynamic. "As a viewer I was always fascinated by what these characters did," he says. "Like, did Sulu hang out with Chekov? I wanted to explore that."

Naturally, given his experience on *Fast And Furious* we should also expect some absolutely bonkers action. Asked what the man who made *Fast & Furious 6's* ridiculous cars-versus-superjet finale does when he's freed from the bounds of gravity, Lin tries to stay tight-lipped but can't help but crack a grin. "It's…" He can't restrain himself. "It's *awesome*." OR

**IN CINEMAS: JULY 22**

**Top:** Anton Yelchin's Chekov with Zachary Quinto's Spock. **Above:** Chris Pine as Kirk.

22

# BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

## THE SUPERHERO FACE-OFF THAT KEEPS THINGS GROUNDED



Ben Affleck on set, fighting the (good?) fight as Batman.

"IT HAS BEEN REALLY FUN USING BATMAN AS THE answer to Superman," posits director Zack Snyder, "because he's not flying around and acting crazy. He's just driving around in his Batmobile, doing his Batstuff." Batman, thinks Snyder, is the key to his DC movie expansion quite because he *doesn't* have powers. In many respects, the $200 million-plus superhero head-to-head, one of the biggest event movies of 2016, will step back from the broad sweeps of CG in *Man Of Steel* for a more grounded approach — all this despite the recent trailer revelation that monstrous villain Doomsday will also join the mix. "We were able to do a lot of this practically," Snyder boasts. "Batman brings that back."

So the Batmobile was shot hurtling around Detroit (Gotham), the Batcave was a vast set, and Ben Affleck will be clambering up buildings in his Bat-armour. The training regimes emphasised physical action over expressing yourself in a leotard. Snyder reiterates that the stylistic lodestone remains Chris Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy. Those films originally set DC apart from the Marvel universe. And it was Nolan who set *Man Of Steel* in motion, wondering what would happen if Kal-El arrived in the real world.

"Figuring out how to mix Batman's practical approach with Superman has been an awesome experience," Snyder says of his central conflict. Indeed, one of the themes of *Batman V Superman* is how do you bring Superman down to earth? Snyder has been determined to visually "up-the-ante" on a visceral dust-up like never before, shooting much of it in Nolan's preferred IMAX format. "I'm not sure how long those cameras are going to be around. But I have never shot digitally." **IN**

**IN CINEMAS: MARCH 25**

23

# THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

## THE SNOW WHITE-FREE FOLLOW-UP PROMISES A LIGHTER TOUCH



Jessica Chastain as warrior Sara and Charlize Theron as the villainous Ravenna.

THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT FOR THE GRIM, AXE-hurling Huntsman in 2012's fairy-tale remix *Snow White & The Huntsman* was, reveals Chris Hemsworth, "referencing Indiana Jones and that kind of fun." Then, he adds, "we went in a different direction." Now the Huntsman returns, without Kristen Stewart's Snow White, but with some added Indy mojo instead. "This time we wanted it to be more of an adventure story."

The prequel/sequel to the gorgeous but overly sombre 2012 hit is going to be a much cheerier affair. Cedric Nicolas-Troyan, who makes his directing debut here, backs Hemsworth up. "Visually we're in the same realm, but tonally it's a lot lighter. Chris always had that thing with the Huntsman being a bit more open and light, and that's something we're really going for."

Indiana Jones isn't the only '80s touchstone cited. Unsurprisingly, given the return of the dwarves under Nick Frost's Nion and female dwarf newcomers led by Sheridan Smith's Mrs Bromwyn, is an old fantasy favourite. "Did you ever see *Willow*?" asks Jessica Chastain, who plays fierce warrior Sara. "That is absolutely the film of my childhood. And now I'm playing the bad-ass redhead from *Willow*!"

But for all the lightening, we are also promised higher stakes. While Charlize Theron's thoroughly evil Ravenna bookends the story, her icy sister Freya (Emily Blunt) also looms. She's less the sort of snow queen to belt out empowering show tunes and more the type to habitually freeze people. "Everyone needs a hobby," shrugs Blunt. "Hers is human popsicle chess." **HOH**

**IN CINEMAS: APRIL 22**



24

# WESTWORLD

**IN JONATHAN NOLAN AND HBO'S HANDS, MICHAEL CRICHTON'S WEST GETS A HELLUVA LOT WILDER**



**Above:** Inhabitants James Marsden and Evan Rachel Wood. **Left:** Park creators Anthony Hopkins and Jeffrey Wright.

IT WASN'T YOUR USUAL casting call. When a request went out for background artists to appear in new HBO series *Westworld*, it stipulated they may have to perform "genital-to-genital touching", or "contort to form a table-like shape while being fully nude". Though the channel has since distanced itself, pointing out that the controversial call was written by a third-party company, it's clear this take on the Michael Crichton sci-fi classic, which is overseen by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy (with input from J. J. Abrams), will be very different from the *Westworld* your dad saw in 1973…

The show was announced to the world as "a dark odyssey about the dawn of artificial consciousness and the future of sin". Nolan's take is more succinct: "It's fucked up." But the original's high concept remains essentially unchanged: what if you could live out your Wild West fantasies in an immaculately realised frontier town, where everything — from gunslingers to saloon girls to rattlesnakes — is a robot? It's all fun and games, until a virus hits and the constructs start going Sergio Leone on the tourists.

A big-screen *Westworld* remake almost happened a decade ago, with Arnold Schwarzenegger circling the Yul Brynner role of a Terminator-esque android cowboy. That fell through, paving the way for this more ambitious long-form project, which expands the story's scope — and, enticingly, casts Ed Harris in the Brynner role. The narrative will not only follow visitors (Ben Barnes and Jimmi Simpson, replacing the film's Richard Benjamin and James Brolin) but delve deeper into the park's behind-the-scenes operations.

In another casting coup, the park's creator, Dr. Robert Ford, is played by Anthony Hopkins. "He runs this whole cyberworld," says the actor, making his HBO debut. "It's one of those once-in-a-lifetime roles... They're being very secretive about it: things are beginning to go weird and that's all I can say..." **NDS**

**ON SKY ATLANTIC: SUMMER TBC**



25

# BOURNE

## MATT DAMON, PAUL GREENGRASS, CINEMA'S COOLEST SPY: THE REUNION OF THE YEAR



Matt Damon returns to his iconic role as Jason Bourne.

PRODUCER FRANK MARSHALL CALLED IT "*BOURNE 2016*", via hashtag in September. The IMDb calls it *Untitled Matt Damon/Bourne Sequel*. And, if it follows the pattern of the Robert Ludlum/Eric Van Lustbader novels, it'll be *The Bourne Betrayal*. But, whatever the title, the point is: this summer, Jason Bourne is back — properly back (no spin-off nonsense here) — with Matt Damon beating up the bad guys and Paul Greengrass in the director's chair.

The duo behind the one-two punch of 2004's *Supremacy* and 2007's *Ultimatum* had consistently said they'd only do another *Bourne* if a great story presented itself. But Damon says there was more to it. They wanted to show a different Bourne. "We both felt we needed time to pass. You want it to feel different, you want to see him older, and it gives it more weight if you find him grey and grizzled after a dozen years or so."

While Damon won't say what draws Bourne back, he does say it's linked to the Blackbriar/Treadstone storyline. The real Bourne legacy, if you will. "There's a lot that's still unresolved for him," he says. "He's got his memory back, but that doesn't mean he's healed. You find him in a dark place. If you found him fat and happy and living in Ibiza, there wouldn't really be a movie."

Damon also says this will feel very much of a piece with the previous trilogy. "It's the last *Identity* journey for him. If the franchise were to go on, we'd need to figure out another direction." So, while there will be new elements — Tommy Lee Jones, Vincent Cassel and Alicia Vikander are on board, and locations include Washington, D.C. and Las Vegas — we can still expect a killer car chase. "We're definitely going big in act three," laughs Damon. "We're throwing a lot of tin around". **CH**

**IN CINEMAS: JULY 29**



26

# OUTCAST

## A NEW EXORCISE IN FEAR

WHAT INSPIRED *THE WALKING Dead* creator Robert Kirkman to create his zombie comic-book hit was the idea of what would happen *after* the apocalypse — he picked up where most zombie movies left off, and it's turned into a TV epic. Now another of his properties has been adapted for TV, and promises to do the same for exorcism as *TWD* did for the undead.

Set in smalltown West Virginia, all the usual tropes — levitating child, oozing bile, icy breath — are present, but there's a twist. Kyle Barnes (Patrick Fugit) has already had his life destroyed by demons, so now he's looking for answers. Along for the ride is boozehound Reverend Anderson (*Life On Mars*' Philip Glenister), who's been trying to exorcise spirits all his life but doesn't have his buddy's gift for demon-wrangling. What they find out might threaten civilisation as a whole. "Robert Kirkman is unique," says Glenister, "*Outcast* won't go the way you expect it." **JN**

**ON FOX: 2016 TBC**



27

# VINYL

## BOARDWALK EMPIRE RECORDS, ANYONE?

HAVING BROUGHT THE Prohibition era to vivid life in HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, showrunner Terence Winter and director/producer Martin Scorsese have now channelled their mojo into '70s rock 'n' roll. This time they've got Mick Jagger on board as producer, too. In fact, it was his all idea, first pitched eight years ago. "He wanted to do a movie sort of like *Casino* in the world of rock 'n' roll," says Winter. "Over the years it morphed into a TV series."

Starring Bobby Cannavale as a record label boss trying to revive his company, with Olivia Wilde, Ray Romano and Juno Temple joining him on the cast list, it has all the signs of the kind of prestige saga we've come to expect from HBO, with Jagger's involvement promising a rich authenticity. "It's a period piece set in New York City in 1973," Winter confirms. "Historical events, and certainly musicians of the era, will intersperse with fictional people." **DJ**

**ON SKY ATLANTIC: FEBRUARY TBC**



28

# INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

The end of the world gets real thanks to modern technology.

## ROLAND EMMERICH UPGRADES THE APOCALYPSE

"WHEN I MADE THE original *Independence Day* I had these images in my head and I couldn't do them," says director Roland Emmerich. "Then I did *2012* and saw what we could technically do now."

It's hard to believe it's been two decades since the first movie, with its gargantuan, city-shadowing spaceships and its gleeful national monument-destruction, reinvented the alien-invasion picture for a generation; if ETs weren't blowing shit up good, they simply weren't doing it properly. But Emmerich is now finally poised to bring his unwelcome visitors roaring back into multiplexes. The extensive wait, it appears, was necessary. During the intervening years, the director honed and expanded his mass-destruction skills with the likes of *The Day After Tomorrow* and, yes, *2012*. So if you thought the last *ID4* aimed big, Emmerich teases that you ain't seen nothing yet.

The lid is screwed tight on what precisely he and his team (including *Independence Day* and *2012* VFX supervisor Marc Weigert) are cooking up for round two of this mega-conflict, but we do know that the interspecies arms race has escalated hugely. In 2014 Emmerich had what he says was "the key idea" to making a sequel work, namely, "We always knew that they would be back." That, he says, "was the kicker. That was when I decided we really had a good movie. The first invasion changed society totally. It's a different world. In this film we are as a human race united."

So the next generation of nervy Earthlings in *Independence Day: Resurgence* has adopted and adapted much of the technology their tentacley foes left behind during the last invasion. With Will Smith out of the picture, it falls to Liam Hemsworth to head up Earth's rag-tag but tooled-up defence force, though original *ID4* players Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman, Brent Spiner and Judd Hirsch will also appear. Everyone, young and old, is fully expecting the aliens to return. And they are aware they'll be bringing significantly greater firepower with them, including spaceships which, we'd hazard a guess, will make the last movie's super-saucers look like teeny bits of flying crockery. **AS**

**IN CINEMAS: JUNE 24**



29

# CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

## VIGGO MORTENSEN HEADS UP THE INDIE FEEL-GOOD HIT OF THE YEAR



Mortensen and his six youngsters find themselves at odds with the modern world.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A SUPERHERO MOVIE, BUT IT'S A tongue-in-cheek title," explains Viggo Mortensen about *Captain Fantastic* — 2016's biggest contender for The Little Film That Could. It is the second feature directed by actor Matt Ross (*American Horror Story*) following 2012's *28 Hotel Rooms*, and has landed him on *Variety*'s 10 Directors To Watch list. Then there is the cast; alongside Mortensen, keep 'em peeled for Steve Zahn, Missi Pyle, Kathryn Hahn and Frank Langella. And, most importantly, from what we've seen the film delivers laughs and warmth without being overly kooky. Ten years on, we may have a natural successor to *Little Miss Sunshine*.

The story centres on Mortensen's Ben, an idealistic father raising six kids off the grid in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. He wants to imbue them with survival skills, an appreciation of nature and a rigorous classical education. "They are philosopher kings," Mortensen has said of his precocious offspring. "Even the one who is seven years old can talk to you knowledgeably about Plato or German history." So, when Ben is forced to leave his self-imposed exile and bring his family into the Starbucks/satnav age, they are both confused and confronted.

While its underdog status in a franchise-dominated market mirrors the story of outsiders in an intimidating world, there was never any doubt among its cast and crew that *Captain Fantastic* would prevail. As Mortensen says, "It's a labour of love." **IF**

**IN CINEMAS: SUMMER TBC**



30

# ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS: THE MOVIE

## HOW TO GROW OLD DISGRACEFULLY

"WHY SHOULDN'T OLDER women behave badly?" asks Mandie Fletcher, the director of *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie*, which brings chaotic PR Eddie (Jennifer Saunders) and her buddy Patsy (Joanna Lumley) to the big screen 24 years after their TV debut.

"When you're a woman over 45, nobody notices you," she says. "And these two make themselves *so* noticeable. That's what people love about them."

On the day *Empire* visited the set in Canary Wharf, Saunders was smashing up an office and Lumley doing coke off a photocopier — both in character, we should add. You would have to be extremely heavily sedated not to notice them.

The movie follows Eddie's attempts to claw her way back to relevance by taking on a high-profile client, then fleeing to France when she causes an international incident. They may be older but they're no wiser, and hopefully that will only make them funnier. **OR**

**IN CINEMAS: JULY TBC**



31

# KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE: KING ARTHUR

## GUY RITCHIE ADDS GRIT TO THE FAMOUS MYTH

HE'S DONE SWORDS BEFORE (drawn from a cane and brandished by Sherlock Holmes). And he's also done stones (86-carat, swallowed by a dog in *Snatch*). But with all that streetsmart style and swagger, Guy Ritchie was never a filmmaker we'd have expected to deal with the sword *in* the stone. Yet here he is at the helm of the latest attempt (after Jerry Bruckheimer's failed in 2004) to turn our greatest mythical hero into a cinematic franchise — that "*Knights Of The Round Table*" preface is a clue.

Ritchie's gambit is to make the myth all his own. So, in the rough and ready form of Charlie Hunnam (*Sons Of Anarchy*), Arthur has his blue blood buried beneath the grime of Londinium's streets: a dirty-fighting street kid with a big, shiny destiny. This take is, producer Lionel Wigram has promised, "unlike anything you've seen before. It's going to be the coolest King Arthur yet." **DJ**

**IN CINEMAS: JULY 22**

32

# X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

**THE SERIES INTRODUCES ITS DEADLIEST-EVER FOE, IN THE "BIBLICAL", '80S-SET INSTALMENT THAT WILL MIX UP MUTANTS AND MULLETS**



DESPITE, TO THEIR CREDIT, always keeping the heart of their drama on an intimate, interpersonal level, the *X-Men* movies haven't exactly stinted on spectacle — whether mounting battles on the Statue Of Liberty, levitating the Golden Gate Bridge, or throwing a football stadium around. Now, emboldened by the success of 2014's *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, which saw original director Bryan Singer's triumphant return and grossed a series high of $747 million, the sixth entry in the mutant saga is going to take things up *another* notch. "This one does some things that the franchise hasn't really done on film," says writer/producer Simon Kinberg. "You have a character called Apocalypse, who wants to do a different kind of damage than an *X-Men* movie ever has." He's not kidding. Buildings will explode. Cities will crumble. Professor Charles Xavier will finally lose his hair.

Oscar Isaac's Apocalypse, aka En Sabah Nur, is an incredibly powerful, ancient mutant, who awakens from enforced hibernation in the year 1983 and immediately sets out on his mission of world domination. Standing in his way: James McAvoy's Xavier and his trusty team of humanity-defenders. Standing in *their* way: four 'Horsemen' hand-picked by Apocalypse to become his personal protectors — among them Michael Fassbender's Magneto.

"It's the first time we've had a villain in an *X-Men* movie who could compete in terms of physical power and presence with Magneto," adds Kinberg. "It's an interesting dynamic to create."

In terms of both scope and budget, this is the biggest X-movie to date, but nobody's seeing it as a finale. Quite the opposite. Inspired by the success of Marvel Studios, 20th Century Fox is now ramping up its *X-Men* output and has assembled an impressive array of stars, as our exclusive shoot, over the page, reveals. 2017 will see Hugh Jackman's last adventure as Wolverine, there's an adaptation of '80s comic *The New Mutants* in the works ("That's more of a Young Adult movie," says Kinberg), while two further X-films are out this year.

First up is our cover star, *Deadpool*. Then, after Apocalypse has had his wicked way with the world, we'll see Channing Tatum as the Cajun, card-throwing bad boy in *Gambit* (currently due October 7). "It's a sexy PG-13 heist film," explains Kinberg of the movie, directed by Doug Liman, who replaced Rupert Wyatt at the 11th hour. "Channing is a big fan of the comic, so the accent,

**Above:** Michael Fassbender's Magneto. **Right:** Newcomer Ben Hardy as Archangel.





the attitude, the costume in many ways, will be in the film. And he's a character with a complex backstory — we're playing him as a thief in the film, and that's a big part of the story."

But, while spin-offs and solo films will be a big part of the universe in the future, it will always come back to team movies like *X-Men: Apocalypse*. "The main *X-Men* movies are like operas," says Kinberg. Expect this one to get very operatic: death, destruction, loss and longing on a global scale, but with the intimacy Singer and Kinberg have mastered. "This is emotional, philosophical, religious, even," he adds. "There's a little more of a Biblical size and vibe." **CH**

**IN CINEMAS: MAY 19**

TURN FOR *EMPIRE*'S EXCLUSIVE X-UNIVERSE GATHERING

THE 2016 PREVIEW

The X-Family photographed exclusively for Empire at San Diego Comic-Con, July 11 2015

**Meet the X-tended family (left to right)**: **T. J. Miller** (Weasel in *Deadpool*); **James McAvoy** (Professor Charles Xavier in *X-Men: Apocalypse*); **Michael Fassbender** (Magneto in *Apocalypse*); **Channing Tatum** (Gambit in *Gambit*); **Ed Skrein** (Ajax in *Deadpool*); **Gina Carano** (Angel Dust in *Deadpool*); **Jennifer Lawrence** (Mystique in *Apocalypse*); **Hugh Jackman** (Wolverine in *Untitled Wolverine Sequel)*; **Ryan Reynolds** (Deadpool in *Deadpool*); **Brianna Hildebrand** (Negasonic Teenage Warhead in *Deadpool*); **Oscar Isaac** (Apocalypse in *Apocalypse*); **Evan Peters** (Quicksilver in *Apocalypse*); **Nicholas Hoult** (Beast in *Apocalypse*); **Olivia Munn** (Psylocke in *Apocalypse*). PORTRAIT **SARAH DUNN** ILLUSTRATION **JOHN ROYLE**

# A Most Wanted Man

**_Empire_ unveils an entirely new kind of cinematic universe, a far cry from the connected heroes of Marvel: one based on the murky espionage thrillers of John le Carré**

WORDS **IAN NATHAN**

**In 1958, while stationed at the MI5 building on Curzon Street in London, the man who would become John le Carré ran agents — "Joes" — in the fight against communism.**



Tom Hiddleston as *The Night Manager*'s former British soldier Jonathan Pine.

There was one, known as 'Harry', who had joined the Communist Party to spy from the inside. Harry was astonishing; all his energies were focused on his mission. Harry could react at all times like one of the faithful. Despite being paid a pittance, Harry knew no other life. "He had bent his mind until he scarcely knew its old shape anymore," his runner reflected. In some senses, the author of the greatest spy stories ever written has always been telling Harry's story.

It's a story producer Simon Cornwell is determined to spread as far as possible. In a members' club close to Trafalgar Square, he meets with *Empire* to set out his manifesto. "I guess we saw the chance with le Carré to establish a company with a reputation for really smart, entertaining, but often quite challenging storytelling," he announces over the pouring of tea. So in 2010, he and younger brother Stephen formed The Ink Factory, expressly (but not exclusively) to champion le Carré's work. Their ambition was to mine his back catalogue and create a kind of prestige equivalent to Marvel's Cinematic Universe. It is pertinent to add that the eloquent, humorous Cornwell is le Carré's (real name: David Cornwell) eldest son.

"They are stories that appeal outside their traditional readership," he reflects, meaning they're not just for those who prefer their espionage without ejector seats. "There is a universal quality to a lot of his work."

## Beyond the emotional

reasons for Cornwell wanting to be the conduit for his father's creations, these books have extraordinary richness and thrilling plots, drawn deep from his father's secret life. Born in 1931, the potted le Carré biography goes like this: peripatetic childhood, absconded mother, unscrupulous father (a domineering and abusive conman), draconian public schools and a brief escape to cobbled Bern, Switzerland, in 1948, where he was approached by a "lady in sensible shoes" to attend left-wing student groups and "report the names of any British citizens there". Later, MI5 had him infiltrate communist gatherings in Oxford. Later still, MI6 stationed him in Bonn, Germany, where he ran agents going undercover in neo-Nazi cliques, wondering if they ever really came back.

He began to write, translating the "tradecraft" of his daily toil — heavily embroidering it, too — into 23 novels, a fictional universe as defined and beloved as that of Dickens. Like a gateway into a secret club, it had its own jargon — "lamplighters", "scalphunters" and "burrowers" — much of it since adopted by the intelligence services. When *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (which was made into a brilliant, cold-hearted film with Richard Burton in 1965) became a bestseller in 1963, he dropped out of the service to write full time, denying for years what was patently obvious — that he had been a spy.

"I'm a liar," he later confessed. "Born to lying, bred to it, trained to it by an industry that lies for a living, practised in it as a novelist."

Simon Cornwell wants to be clear he hasn't installed himself as "keeper of my father's holy flame", but to muster great adaptations. His fellow producer, Stephen Garrett, insists that, "It is not taxidermy."

It is also not simply a case of grabbing a book off the family shelf at will. There is a maze of rights ownership across the canon as impenetrable as the ranks of British intelligence. Other producers have been alive to their potential. There have been 15 adaptations to date. The recent *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011) was backed by Working Title, and *The Constant Gardener* (2005) was a Focus Features release. Both were big hits.

Still, The Ink Factory is now the driving force in the LCCU. It was involved in the Philip Seymour Hoffman-starring *A Most Wanted Man*, and has recently completed *Our Kind Of Traitor*. In the pipeline is a feature version of *A Delicate Truth*, le Carré's most recent novel, being adapted by William Monahan (*The Departed*). "It's a very high-impact book," says Cornwell. "You don't know who is betraying who." Plus, there will be a possible version of *Absolute Friends*, the saga of a friendship that splits along political lines. "With luck we will cast two incredible actors..."

First, though, comes *The Night Manager*, which Cornwell considers




one of the most robust adaptations ever undertaken of a le Carré novel. Cornwell had been impressed by, as he puts it, "the emergence of event-based series, with big budgets and access to enormous talent." So here is a six-part television series aiming at HBO pre-eminence. A real statement of intent by The Ink Factory. And something which provides cast-iron proof that le Carré can be just as bright and glamorous as certain other espionage properties. "It's a different kind of journey," smiles the son of its creator.

## Sa Fortaleza, a converted

fortress that straddles an outcrop on the northern shore of Mallorca was, until recently, the most expensive piece of real estate in Europe (once on the market for a cool €125 million). It is the kind of palatial spread that once played host to Picasso. Bond villains have settled for less. But for now, it is home to *The Night Manager*, entering its final weeks of production among the infinity pools and state-of-the-art security.

In today's scene, located on an enchanted terrace where a party is being thrown, Hugh Laurie is doing magic tricks for children. He plays Richard Roper, 'The Worst Man In The World', a billionaire chemical weapons dealer who sleeps like a baby despite trading in death. His voice dripping honey, Laurie teases and delights them. Everyone, cast and crew, is suddenly mesmerised by the performance, caught by a python's dance. Only Tom Hiddleston, as ex-soldier Jonathan Pine, who is now undercover in Roper's organisation, is immune. He just watches. "There is something very active about the way Pine is passive," the actor explains, coolly summarising the le Carré MO in the process.

*The Night Manager* has come close to a movie adaptation on two occasions. Shortly after it was published, Sydney Pollack hoped to direct it, and Robert Towne wrote a screenplay. Then it just sat in limbo for five years before Brad Pitt optioned it, but that didn't work out either. "It needed the space of television," maintains Cornwell.

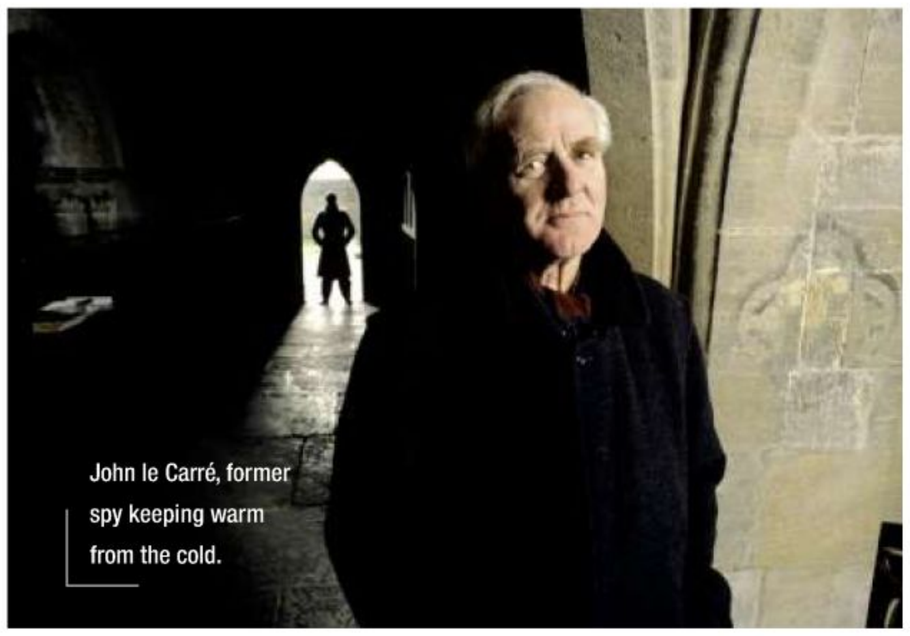
Symbolically, the series returns le Carré to the BBC for the first time in 29 years, home of the exalted 1979 Alec Guinness version of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and the (arguably even better) sequel *Smiley's People* (1982), as well as an underappreciated take on le Carré's autobiographical masterpiece *A Perfect Spy* in 1987.

Those who have tuned in for fresh intelligence on this tapestry of grouchy espionage might well be wondering what we are doing in a Mediterranean paradise. The sun never shone on Smiley's labyrinth of Cold War intrigue, the prevailing weather pattern being a dank Cambridge Circus, the palette running the full spectrum from porridge beige to tea-stain brown.

"This is a quite conscious choice of doing the opposite," declares director Susanne Bier. "I want the audience to want to be part of this world, and for them to grow more aware of what is beneath."

The Danish director of *In A Better World* has long harboured a secret envy for those who get to direct le Carré. She adores his "staunch moral point of view". She also loves that television allows her to express the subtleties of his work — "to have all the intricate patterns of the characters," she muses happily. And this is a story of globetrotting intrigue 500 pages long. That calls for breadth.

The series starts in Zermatt, Switzerland, flashes back to Cairo, then to London, Devon, Madrid, Mallorca, then Istanbul, the Turkish-Syria border (using Morocco) and back to Cairo. There is a hint of Bond's intrepid universe, certainly Craig-era Bond,


John le Carré, former spy keeping warm from the cold.


Robin Wright and Philip Seymour Hoffman in *A Most Wanted Man*.

about its swirls of wealth and corruption. "Honestly, this has never felt like television," marvels Hiddleston, surely a candidate for 007 if Craig calls time on his glowering. "It has felt like a six-hour film."

There is much more to this universe than gloomy Smiley. Le Carré's post-Cold War novels (*The Night Manager* was written as the Wall fell) have expanded his horizons. Relocated from 1993 to 2016 with very little surgery, here the geopolitical backdrop is the Arab Spring, and the rise in Islamic militancy. Far from being tweedy and bespectacled, *The Night Manager* couldn't be more relevant and, chillingly, has only grown more so since production finished in late July.

And what a cast. Sitting in the luxuriant sunshine, Hiddleston is so articulate, so tuned in to the minutiae of his character, so damnably English, he might as well have been made up by le Carré. It is a further mark of the magnetic draw of the author that they have landed Marvel's loquacious Loki. When Tomas Alfredson set about casting his version of *Tinker Tailor*, there was an orderly queue of British talent waiting to enter its tragi-thrilling underworld. Cumberbatch, Firth, Hardy, Oldman, Strong: it reads like a public-school register. Hugh Laurie just happens to be a le Carré nut too, long active in bringing *The Night Manager* to the screen. You could test him on the essentials of the universe, similar to how the crew of *The Lord Of The Rings* would test Christopher Lee's (a spy-turned-actor) knowledge of Tolkien.

Not that le Carré has been an absentee landlord. "He is always quite close to the adaptations," says Cornwell. "He finds engaging with filmmakers hugely exciting." Having his sons as producers obviously helps the flow of intelligence. In this, you could say there has been something active about the way le Carré is passive. He politely questioned the depiction of Olivia Colman's Burr, the outspoken mother-to-be and spook running Pine, feeling it needed to be delicate, with "more kindness in it". And he makes a witty cameo — much like Stan Lee does in the various instalments of his own cinematic universe.

## *Empire*'s next stop on this

tour of le Carré's new world takes us somewhere slightly more appropriate to the writer's clandestine rubric. It is April 2014, and the shoot for *Our Kind Of Traitor* has set up shop at the famous Ealing Studios. Among its warren of soundstages, the rudimentary interior of a mountain chalet has been built, which is currently being imperilled by a garrison of hoods. Ewan McGregor, Naomie Harris and a gun-toting Stellan Skarsgård, leaning heavily on a Russian accent, are exiting fast through a bolthole in the floor.

"It's really a contemporary thriller," points out Gail Egan, another producer keen to combat the perception that the famous author necessarily signals a dose of unfathomable dad lit. The current scene certainly feels more like a full-on action movie.

For The Ink Factory, co-producing with Egan's Potboiler Productions, this is a straight movie adaptation. In Cornwell's words, "a propulsive story, well adapted to the 100-minute format". Almost Hitchcockian in structure, it follows an innocent if listless couple, Perry (McGregor) and Gail (Harris), who are approached by an extravagant Russian oligarch named Dima (Skarsgård) claiming he has secrets to sell to British intelligence. "Unlike some of his other books," Egan says, "it has at the centre of it an ordinary couple who fall into the world of MI6."

Like *The Night Manager*, *Our Kind Of Traitor* boasts high-end components. Susanna White (*Generation Kill*, *Boardwalk Empire*) is directing, and Ron Howard and Danny Boyle regular Anthony Dod Mantle is the cinematographer, so don't expect the statutory noir gloom here, either. And they've got Paris, Marrakesh, Moscow and the Alps on the itinerary.

The crucial character is Hector. Assayed by the gifted Damian Lewis, he is the MI6 tactician behind Percy and Gail's involvement with Dima. He is the author of their peril, and le Carré's natural surrogate, who has become infatuated with Gail. "It's the personal mixing with the professional," says Egan — another apt description of le Carré's house style.

Though it has a very different feel to *The Night Manager*, it does appear that there will be connections between the two properties, similar even to Marvel's universe — after all, Marvel can't make a move without consulting the holy diktats of comic-book lore (and, following *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, are going a bit le Carré too). For example, the "River House" (MI6's fortress on the Thames) that casts an eye over proceedings in *The Night Manager* is surely the very same agency in *Our Kind Of Traitor*.

This is nothing new, though. George Smiley appears in eight novels, five of



# LeCAMEOS

**JOHN LE CARRÉ HAS MADE BRIEF APPEARANCES IN MANY OF HIS ADAPTATIONS. MUCH LIKE A CERTAIN OTHER MOVIE-UNIVERSE CREATOR...**

**The Little Drummer Girl** (1984)
As the policeman who appears when Diane Keaton's Charlie goes to her flat in London.

**Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy** (2011)
As a tweedy old service gent at the Circus Christmas party leading the jokey rendition of the Soviet anthem.

**A Most Wanted Man** (2015)
As a thoughtful patron at a seedy Hamburg bar, seated in the booth behind Philip Seymour Hoffman's weary spy Günther Bachmann.

**The Night Manager** (2016)
As the patron of a Madrid restaurant whose dinner is interrupted when sozzled henchman Corcoran (Tom Hollander) intercepts a lobster meant for him.

**Our Kind Of Traitor** (2016)
As an attendant at the Einstein Museum in Bern, where a key scene takes place. He speaks perfect Swiss German.



Director Susanna White with le Carré and Naomie Harris.









**Above:** Ewan McGregor's Perry, in hot water in *Our Kind Of Traitor*. **Left:** Stellan Skarsgård's Russian oligarch Dima. **Below:** Damian Lewis' Hector with compromised couple Perry and Gail (Naomie Harris).

which have been adapted. Ned, played by James Fox in *The Russia House* (1994), memorialises Smiley in *The Secret Pilgrim*. Across le Carré's self-styled "saga" there are many such links, but it is as much about thematic unity. Running through his work like a stick of Brighton rock are flawed characters, crushed idealism, thinly disguised autobiography and a determination to engage with the real world.

Akin to *The Night Manager*, the Anton Corbijn-directed *A Most Wanted Man* (the despairing tale of a German spymaster played by Philip Seymour Hoffman) investigated the moral ambivalence in counter-terrorist methods. *Our Kind Of Traitor* synthesises the new face of Russia (le Carré's old foe). "There is a lot of Russian money in London," notes Egan. But at heart the story is about family. Dima may be an uncouth, unpredictable Russian Mafioso, but he is driven to protect his loved ones. "It's about loyalty, both to those you love and to your country," thrills Egan. "That's a very le Carré theme."

## If there is a knack to

adapting le Carré, Stephen Garrett thinks it is about recognising what makes him unique. "If you try to Hollywoodise him you fall into an elephant trap." Such as when a happy ending was tacked onto the otherwise sturdy version of *The Russia House*. "There is a darkness underpinning it, which Hollywood doesn't like," explains Garrett. "The other thing is, and it is not coincidence, the best ones have not been tackled by an American or a Brit, but by a European or Latin American director."

The outsider's perspective has become the ideal vantage point. They couldn't be more thrilled to have not only a European, but a female director on *The Night Manager*. "You are dealing with people who don't express what they feel," says Garrett. "There is a lot of internal combustion going on. Susanne has teased and cajoled and coaxed the cast into delivering brilliant psychological performances."

Spies should be viewed through a perplexed lens, agents of a morally uncertain realm as complex as *Game Of Thrones* (Littlefinger is pure le Carré). The fickle nature of Englishness has been a line of enquiry throughout le Carré's fiction, sourced to his bitterness at the great betrayal by Kim Philby and the Cambridge spies while he was still in the service. *Tinker Tailor* is a direct correlation of that treachery, and key to the dramatic texture of *The Night Manager* is the fact that Roper is English.

"What he is so good at is unpicking something very specific about Englishness," notes Hiddleston. One of the reasons Pine is so driven in his pursuit of Roper is the fact that he is an Englishman willing to sell a private arsenal to an Egyptian crook. "You can feel le Carré's anger that someone who has had the benefits of an English education is using that privilege to do the worst things imaginable."

Start peeling the onion and further layers of meaning emerge. Le Carré, meanwhile, once claimed that all his "great villains have something of my father in them". So Roper too is a reflection of Ronnie Cornwell, the beguiling crook. Life going undercover as art.

## Outside the London club,

the evening has turned dark and lamps have been lit, reminding *Empire* of Smiley's atmospherics. People never spoke of a golden age of television in those days, but those BBC versions remain some of the finest drama ever moulded to the small screen. Cornwell hints enigmatically that a possible return to the Cold War might be part of his plans. "It would be an interesting idea, wouldn't it?" Maybe a remake of *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* is in the offing?

Things have come full circle. *The Night Manager* justly takes its place alongside the original Smiley serials. *Empire* can attest to it being intricate, involving telly, with a spellbinding evocation of wickedness from Laurie that makes a mockery of a recent E. S. Blofeld. It feels timely, and timeless. A sure sign that there is further life and relevance in le Carré's world.

Back in Mallorca, Hiddleston takes in a view of impossible wealth and tries to summarise why it is le Carré's network of unordinary Joes refuses to go out of fashion. "This kind of material appeals to that desire to see behind the curtain," he offers. "What deals are being made, who is in whose pocket. When you see that high finance is in bed with politics, which is in bed with the media, there are all these conflicts of loyalty..." It is an expanding universe that looks awfully like our own. E

***THE NIGHT MANAGER* WILL AIR IN FEBRUARY ON BBC ONE. *OUR KIND OF TRAITOR* IS OUT IN CINEMAS ON MAY 6 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**

# DON'T PANIC!

## A *Dad's Army* reboot? Really? How "a bad idea" became a surefire British hit

WORDS **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**




Toby Jones' revamped Captain Mainwaring talks strategy with director Oliver Parker.

## IT WAS SATURDAY

evening in Damian Jones' living room and the telly was on. Surfing the channels for something, anything, that didn't involve the caterwauling hopefuls of *The X Factor*, the *History Boys* producer, half paying attention, landed on a repeat of *Dad's Army*, the '70s sitcom about a group of elderly and hapless Local Defence Volunteers set during the early days of World War II. Rather than being musty and tired, Jones was surprised to discover its laughs remained evergreen. Well, everkhaki. "Yes, it was still funny," he remembers, "and the characters were timeless, but to be on at prime time? It was mad for a 40 year-old TV show."

The madness was compounded when he saw the viewing figures. "It was getting nearly three million every weekend, which was ridiculously high. Audiences were still lapping it up." In a flash, his producer's instincts kicked in. He approached the estate of the show's creators, Jimmy Perry and David Croft, with the idea of bringing the men of Walmington-on-Sea's Home Guard platoon to the big screen. Surely the time was right, he argued, for Captain Mainwaring and his men to defy Mr. Hitler again? And who wouldn't want to see Lance-Corporal Jones' sausage in glorious widescreen? Well, its cast, for one...

## "I ABSOLUTELY, 100 PER

cent thought it was a bad idea," recalls Toby Jones, the movie's blustering, pompous Mainwaring. Bill Nighy, playing the laconic, genteel Sergeant Wilson, concurred. "My first thought was, 'Are you out of your mind?' Dad's Army is so beloved and it already exists quite happily." Even prospective director Oliver Parker had his doubts. He'd resurrected *St. Trinian's*, a British comedy of even more vintage provenance, but raised an obvious question: "Those characters are so etched in our minds, how do you write for them?"

The internet wasn't wild on the idea, either. "The fact that there's a *Dad's Army* remake coming out makes me feel sick," was one of the more measured *Reddit* responses when the project was announced. "The worst news I've had since *Mrs. Brown's Boys* was recommissioned," wailed one tweet.

Like video games and Matthew Perry, British sitcoms have rarely made an auspicious transition to the big screen. You could map out the minefield a *Dad's Army* movie would have to swerve just by looking at British films of the '70s. Even the best of them, *Porridge* in 1979, was hardly cinematic in scope; the worst, *Are You Being Served?* (1977), was, in the considered words of one reviewer, "guilty of violating almost every law of film". Little wonder *Dad's Army*'s fellow comedy hall-of-famers like *Fawlty Towers*, *Only Fools And Horses* and *Blackadder* had never attempted the upgrade. One of the most flawed examples did little more than extend an episode. That movie? *Dad's Army*, a 1971 adaptation by Columbia Pictures that united the same cast to tackle the Luftwaffe — well, three of its airmen — while dressed as choristers. Not so much *The Eagle Has Landed* as *The Eagle Has Stopped In For Tea*.

## "FROM BOTH THE 'PRO' AND 'ANTI' REACTIONS, WE KNEW WE'D TOUCHED A NERVE."

**DAMIAN JONES, PRODUCER**




"We didn't study the '70s Columbia movie," says Damian Jones, "but we did watch it, and it didn't feel like a feature film. We felt we could do something different." A new movie treatment demanded a structure that would free the characters from the sitcom convention that they should learn nothing and never evolve, while they had to rely on more than nostalgia.

## FORTUNATELY, THE

producer was holding an ace. The script he'd commissioned captured the spirit of the original *Dad's Army* and offered its new recruits the chance to put a fresh stamp on the characters. Screenwriter Hamish McColl, the writer of twin hits *Mr. Bean's Holiday* and *Johnny English Reborn*, shifted the unit from 1940 to 1944, with Hitler in full retreat and the Allies preparing to invade Normandy. Or is it Calais? A fake, inflatable army — the real-life Operation Bodyguard — is stationed near Walmington to keep the Nazis guessing. Meanwhile, a real (uninflatable) Nazi spy is at large and on the verge of discovering the deception. McColl's screenplay pushed and prodded the established characters in perilous new directions. "We wanted to put the men in more jeopardy," stresses the writer, "to give them the chance to prove their worth and protect their country. The TV show had never really gone there."

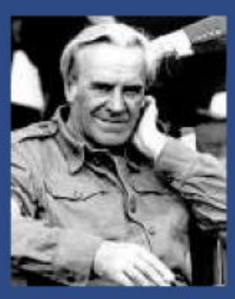
Broadening the story's appeal, the women of Walmington were given proper screentime — and a piece of the action — for the first time. Mrs. Godfrey (Annette Crosbie) and Mrs. Pike (Sarah Lancashire) join Mrs. Mainwaring (Felicity Montagu, aka Alan Partridge's Lynn), an unseen presence in the BBC sitcom, in the spy hunt. "Mrs. Mainwaring was just a dent in the bunk bed," points out Damian Jones of the original series. Her full, physical presence here is a sure sign that he and McColl are thinking of a modern audience for this *Dad's Army*. "Hamish asked how we could do something new so we said, 'Let's show Mrs.

# DAD'S ARMY BABYLON

### THE ASTONISHING PRIVATE LIVES OF THE ORIGINAL ARMY



**Arthur Lowe**
**(Captain Mainwaring)**
Lowe embedded himself in the nation's psyche as *Corrie*'s stubborn draper Leonard Swindley. A much-liked but occasionally slightly prickly cove, he refused to take *Dad's Army* scripts home, declaring "I'm not having rubbish like that in my house," and had a clause in his contract forbidding any scene in which he might appear without his trousers.



**John Le Mesurier**
**(Sergeant Wilson)**
Le Mesurier was a heavy drinker who, during his drier spells, would rely instead on cannabis, and enjoyed frequenting Soho jazz clubs. Le Mesurier was married three times; his second wife was Hattie Jacques, while his third, Joan Malin left him for his pal, comedian Tony Hancock — with whom he remained friends. He died in 1983, after uttering the last words, "It's all been rather lovely."



**Clive Dunn**
**(Lance-Corporal Jones)**
Only 48 when he was cast as elderly butcher Jones (catchphrase: "They don't like it up 'em"), Dunn had been playing doddery oldsters since *Bootsie And Snudge* in 1960. Continued mining the lovable codger seam with kids' comedy *Grandad* (1979-'84), inspired by his toxic novelty single of 1970, which looked like being Christmas number one until a strike at the pressing plant saved the nation.



**Arnold Ridley**
**(Private Godfrey)**
The most genuinely aged of the cast, Somme veteran Ridley was 81 by the time the show ended in 1977. As a playwright his *The Ghost Train* was a smash hit and was filmed a number of times, but only after the hard-up war hero had sold the rights for a measly £200, forcing him to work almost up to his death aged 88.



**Bill Pertwee**
**(Warden Hodges)**
The man who played Mainwaring's main foil was rejected for military service during World War II owing to ill-health caused by a swimming accident. His distant cousin and fellow actor Jon, later to find fame as Doctor Who, had been offered the role of Captain Mainwaring but turned it down. ADAM SMITH



Mainwaring, let's explore the relationships between the different couples.' The women are instrumental in solving our plot in a Miss Marple-like fashion."

The Perry-Croft estate was persuaded. So was the director. "I really bought into what Hamish had done," explains Parker of the set-up. "Our chaps have had four years of helping old ladies across the road and pressing apples, so they start at a low ebb." McColl, whose father was a former head of MI6 and was well-versed in wartime espionage, likened the process of capturing the voices of Mainwaring, Jones, Godfrey and co. to spending time with a group of favourite uncles. "It was a real joy writing for these characters," McColl enthuses. "You love one because he shines off the other."

The reservations held by Toby Jones and Nighy lasted only as long as it took them to read McColl's screenplay. "Hamish had done a very smart thing," remembers Jones, "which was to create enough of a story for the comedy to have legs. You can't just have laugh after laugh like in a 30-minute episode, and in those gaps you see the cost of their buffoonery." Rounding out a mini-*Harry Potter* reunion was Michael Gambon as the doddery Godfrey, plus Daniel Mays (the spiv-like Walker), Tom Courtenay (the bellicose Lance-Corporal Jones) and Bill Paterson (as stormy Scotsman, Private Frazer). Blake Harrison was the obvious choice to play the baby of the unit, Private Frank Pike. As an Inbetweener, he brought cheering proof that not every TV comedy was doomed on the big screen. "I had slight reservations about playing a character that's similar to (*his Inbetweeners character*) Neil, but Pike is a little softer," Harrison explains. "He's a big movie buff who wants to be living in Casablanca or Seahawk, but the reality doesn't quite live up to his expectations. It was about creating my own Private Pike, not doing a carbon copy of the original." It was exactly what the filmmakers had in mind. "It wasn't about casting big comedy actors," stresses Parker, "but paying the characters the respect of great performers doing something fresh and nuanced."

**"WE WANTED TO PUT THE MEN IN JEOPARDY. THE TV SHOW HAD NEVER REALLY GONE THERE."** **HAMISH McCOLL, WRITER**

Adding star wattage as one of the new characters, urbane journalist Rose Winters, Catherine Zeta-Jones was persuaded to swap Manhattan for Walmington. "It was only tempting because of this plethora of fabulous actors and my absolute love for the TV series," she tells *Empire*.

Damian Jones glowingly describes his quickly assembled ensemble as









"a formidable comic cast". His director puts it more bluntly. "The next thing I knew [everyone was] up for it," he says, "and it's, 'Oh, fuck! Now we've got to make this thing.'" A chance flick of a channel-changer had turned into a movie... And a national news story.

## "IT WAS ALL OVER THE

media," shudders Daniel Mays of October's official cast announcement. In case its recruits were under any illusions, a fresh *Dad's Army* movie was a headline-maker. The sight of their heads cut and pasted onto the bodies of the original cast members offered a ghoulish reminder of the project's profile. "We'd say, 'Oh my God, have you seen the paper today?'" laughs Mays of the rehearsal period. But even dyed-in-the-wool Daddies had to acknowledge the canniness of the casting. The faces fit. With the *Dad's Army* Appreciation Society throwing its support (and, later, some enthusiastic extras) behind the movie, there was abundant goodwill to carry into a 35-day shoot that spanned the calendar's coldest months. But goodwill alone doesn't translate into a good movie, and Parker had designed a pre-shoot boot camp by which he hoped the casting alchemy would result in on-screen gold. Under the watchful eye of a military advisor, the cast learned to parade, square-bash and handle rifles. Really, really badly. "It wasn't your two-month *Band Of Brothers* thing," stresses Mays. "The characters aren't very good at drilling and we certainly embraced that." Gambon was a serial offender, although admits Courtenay, "None of us were very good."

Yet they did bond. When *Empire* visits the Yorkshire coast, standing in as Walmington-on-Sea, on Day 15 (May 8, 1944), there is ample evidence of the cast's chemistry, with Gambon's ad libs sparking outbreaks of corpsing. Also in evidence is Toby Jones' impressive take on Mainwaring, informed by a training in physical theatre in Paris, that is milder and more pratfall-strewn than Arthur Lowe's, but no less funny. "He's more of a lost clown [than Lowe], who was incredibly remorseless in his portrayal," notes his director admiringly. Versatile enough to switch from Marvel terror group Hydra to the Home Guard, the former Arnim Zola led from the front — the seafront, on one occasion. "I had to go into the North Sea," laughs the actor of one icy sequence, "and when they got me back in the trailer, they said, 'You won't be able to do another take, because technically you've got hypothermia."

**Clockwise from left:** New-model army (l-r): Frazer (Bill Paterson), Pike (Blake Morrison), Mainwaring, Godfrey (Michael Gambon) and Wilson (Bill Nighy); Mrs. Pike (Sarah Lancashire), Mrs. Mainwaring (Felicity Montagu) and Mrs. Fox (Alison Steadman) join the ranks; Catherine Zeta-Jones ruffles feathers as the sophisticated Rose; Pike and Mainwaring in their civvies.

## IF, AS CO-STAR BILL

Paterson puts it, making this *Dad's Army* movie was like trying to repaint the Sistine Chapel, Jones' comic artistry offered a dependable undercoat. With a cast of this calibre, it's clearly a loving revival rather than a cheap cash-in — *Captain Mainwaring's Boys D'Movie*, this definitely isn't — but it still needs to connect with modern moviegoers.

"Why now?" ponders Damian Jones. "There's no simple answer to that, but these are characters people love, [it has] a set-up people still find amusing, [it] deals with class, which is timeless, and we have actors to pull it off now. And it's funny. If we can deliver on all that, the time is always right."

Surprisingly, Jones reveals that even the early negative buzz gave him hope. "From both the 'pro' and 'anti' reactions, we knew it had touched a nerve," he explains. "It was something people felt strongly about." The impact of another Bill Nighy movie hadn't gone unnoticed, either. "We'd had the success of [*The Best Exotic*] *Marigold Hotel* and all the talk of the grey pound, and there was lots in the pot that made me think we had the right ingredients to capture that audience." The dream scenario of attracting not just Mum and Dad but the whole family won't be hurt by an awards-season release spot. In a forest of worthy Oscars fare, the sight of Toby Jones being chased by a bull offers a cheery alternative. "It was always a summer movie that slipped to winter," says Jones, "but it still plays as a summer movie."

Like its irrepressible characters, this *Dad's Army 2.0* is aiming for timelessness. "Everyone always wondered if this film was a really good idea or a really stupid one," laugh Jones. "Hopefully it's the former." E

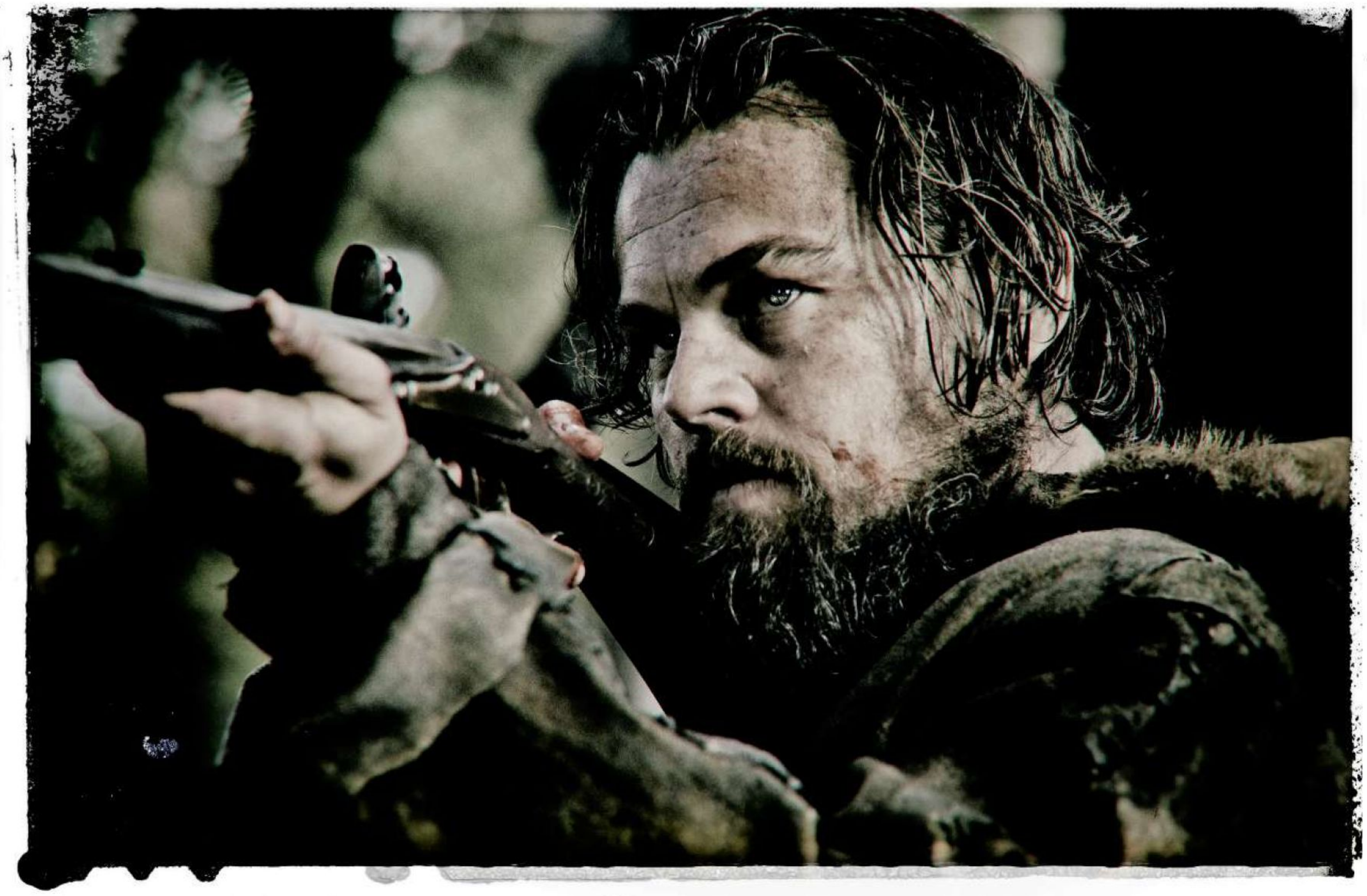
***DAD'S ARMY* IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 5 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**



# THE HARD WAY

WORDS **IAN NATHAN** PORTRAITS **JOHN RUSSO**

**Leonardo DiCaprio** has worked with some of the greatest living directors: Scorsese, Spielberg, Nolan, Cameron. Now he adds Alejandro González Iñárritu to the list with *The Revenant*: his toughest challenge since *Titanic*



**Above:** Seeking revenge as real-life frontiersman Hugh Glass in this month's *The Revenant.*
**Opposite:** On location with *Revenant* director Alejandro González Iñárritu (left).

# M

MIDWINTER IN NORTHERN CALGARY CAN REACH 40 below. So cold that even your eyeballs hurt. Try crawling into a freezing river there, while swathed in a 150lb bear pelt. It's like an electric shock knocks the breath out of you, jamming your nervous system. Now try staying in character. With a wry smile, Leonardo DiCaprio admits it was pretty tough. Making Alejandro González Iñárritu's *The Revenant* was a titanic quest for the authentic. If it was humanly possible, it wasn't faked.

A few weeks previous to *Empire* meeting with DiCaprio, Iñárritu showed him a working cut of *The Revenant*. The film relates the tale of raggedy frontiersman Hugh Glass — this "campfire legend" of the 1820s — who, at a pivotal juncture, is mauled by a grizzly bear and then helpfully buried alive by his companions. Donning the hide of that fallen bear, Glass embarks on a journey of unimaginable hardship across the wilderness to catch up with his former comrades. Settle the score.

DiCaprio, famed for windbags like Jordan Belfort in *The Wolf Of Wall Street*, is still trying to find adequate words to express what he saw. There has been no film like it, he keeps repeating, comparing Iñárritu with Scorsese (the highest compliment he can pay). "From an audience perspective, that bear sequence alone is going to be cinema history," the actor exalts. "It stimulates other senses. You can feel the breath of the bear, the sweat of the character..."

Sitting in a warm New York hotel, surrounded by the spires of civilisation, he talks with calm authority. Then you remember he has been acting since his early teens, and at 41 has 28 feature films to his credit, including some of the most



challenging and dynamic cinema of recent times. From teen idol to Scorsese's muse, DiCaprio has experienced just about everything the movie world can summon up to challenge a favoured son, with the exception of that elusive Oscar win. Still, he freely admits he has never made a film like this before. And as far as he's concerned, it's the film that matters.

If *The Revenant* is an extraordinary measure of the creative stamina of one of the leading filmmakers in the world, it is also a shining emblem of the drive within its leading man. DiCaprio seeks "cinema history". The list of his collaborators reads like the case for auteur theory: not only the Mexican wizard, but Cameron, Spielberg, Tarantino, Nolan, Luhrmann. And there's that special relationship with Scorsese. You don't see many romantic comedies on his CV, and he remains unswayed by the lure of the superhero elect. DiCaprio can only see one way: no pain, no gain. The impossibly famous superstar determined to be an artist.

**It's a simple place to start, but how just how hard was it to make *The Revenant*?**

No-one is going to lie and say it wasn't an incredibly difficult film to take on. The sheer logistics of the locations were challenging in their own right. Add to that Alejandro's technique of rehearsing for months beforehand, Chivo's (*cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki*) all-natural-light technique, the poetry and existential aspect they brought. Alejandro and Chivo work with this meticulous dance of the camera and the actors, and what they accomplish in the movie is pretty profound. And then coupled with the 10,000lb gorilla which was nature... If you want to immerse yourself in the natural world, have that almost be a character in the film, you are beholden to what comes.

**And what did come?**

There were these extreme weather patterns. We had a day that was 40 below and the camera wouldn't even work and actors couldn't act because it was too cold and we couldn't feel our own hands. That coupled with times where we had eight feet of snow out in the vistas that disappeared within five hours because of a heat wave. We were dealing with unprecedented weather events that have never happened in Canada's history ❶. Nature was sending us this crazy message. All the preparation that you can do as an actor is constantly changing because you are adapting to the environment. I have never been part of a film like it in my entire career. It was tough on everyone and everyone worked really hard to accomplish this goal. I don't know how many movies will be made like this again, to tell you the truth. But it is all up there on the screen.

**FOOTNOTES**

❶ Ironically, Iñárritu had the film blessed in a Native American ritual before the film started. "We all sort of joined hands together," says DiCaprio, "and there was a prayer blessing the movie and the land."

**Do you feel comfortable in nature?**
Look, I love nature. I am an environmentalist. I love going to these exotic, amazing places. These mountain men were just a different era of human beings, like primal cavemen living off the land. All this western territory was like the Amazon rain forest. The Northwest and the Southwest territories had not been inhabited yet. There were really no historical records. There is very little to know about these people. There are no photographs, only etchings, journals of fur trappers. Hugh Glass embodies the American spirit in the wilderness, the will to survive, and the triumph of man succumbing to nature and also prevailing❷. So it was like doing a science-fiction movie, almost.

**How easy was it to get into the head of Hugh Glass?**
This was a unique movie for me because it was almost like mime work. I have so little dialogue, almost nothing. I looked at that as an interesting challenge as I have played so many incredibly articulate characters. This was a lot about the preparation beforehand, but it was also about trying to react to my surroundings and this man's will to survive and this vengeance that is the current of the performance. But done as if nobody was watching, as well. I learned everything I possibly could. Not only about muskets, but how to trap animals, how to create fires, how to survive among the elements. You planned as much you can, then you have to throw yourself into the environment. The main thing you find out in the cold is that your hands are victim beyond anything. I made a choice early on to not have gloves, as I don't think he would have them. Every day was a challenge to keep my hands warm, because they would lock up. I enjoyed it... I mean I enjoyed that challenge.

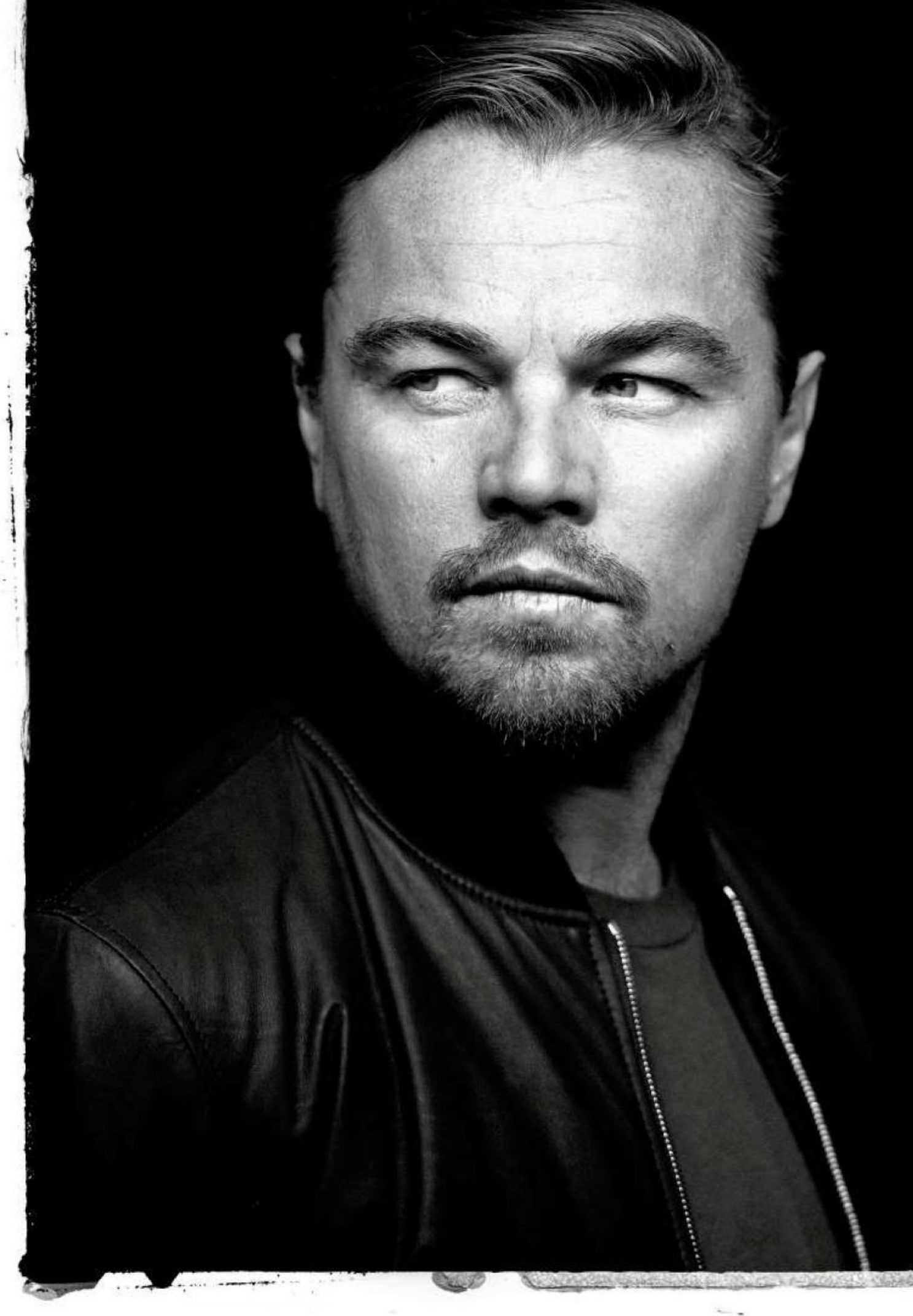
**How did your fellow cast members cope with the adverse conditions?**
The actors Alejandro put in there, he wanted to disappear into the landscape, for it to feel incredibly authentic. But it was hard on all of us. From Domhnall (*Gleeson*) to Tom Hardy, we were basically bearded and hairy from a year living in log cabins. The entire crew, we were all just a bunch of hairy men living up north, trying not to go crazy.

**As an actor, do you ever reach a point where you think, "I can't do this, this is my limit"?**
Sure, absolutely. There are moments when you are sitting amongst nature and creating something and you are in awe of what is in front of you, and there are moments when this stuff is incredibly hard to pull off and it makes you not want to work sometimes. But when I say that to myself, I have to slap myself in the face and say, "Are you out of your mind? You've been given this opportunity." It is important not to get too spoiled. Because it is a gift, it really is. People who have had long careers do look at it that way, as a gift. And if you treat your position in the industry with a flippant attitude it will come back and bite you in the face. If you build it, it will come, so to speak. If you want to be difficult, if you want to be pessimistic about the opportunity you have — and I feel blessed in mine — I think the industry will find a way to make you not work.

**In terms of physically taxing shoots, how did *The Revenant* compare with *Titanic*?**
(*Laughing ruefully*) They are pretty neck and neck. I couldn't choose between them. They are apples and oranges, though. One had a lot of stages; the other was in nature. But the film time was equivalent... Let's put it this way, they were both difficult for different reasons. Although, both had cold water.

**That whole *Titanic* era must seem like a strange dream now...**
It was certainly a surreal point in my life. You become this sort of independent actor and then you are in this one film that for whatever reason connects with people on a worldwide level. And you are at this young age and you really don't know how to react to it. My immediate reaction was to stop everything and take a break and let it settle down. But it has affected my personal life ever since. I don't think you ever get used to the type of attention certainly the media has on you. At the same time, I have absolutely nothing to complain about — it has given me these crazy opportunities. I mean, I am getting to work with Alejandro Iñárritu on this film, the type of film that the studio system doesn't make that often, if ever. So I celebrate this opportunity.

**Early in your career there was talk of you doing a Spider-Man film with James Cameron. How close did you come to making that?**
Not very close, but there was a screenplay❸. I know he was semi-serious about doing it at some point, but I don't remember any further talks about it. We had a couple of chats. I think there was a screenplay that I read, but I don't remember. This was 20 years ago!

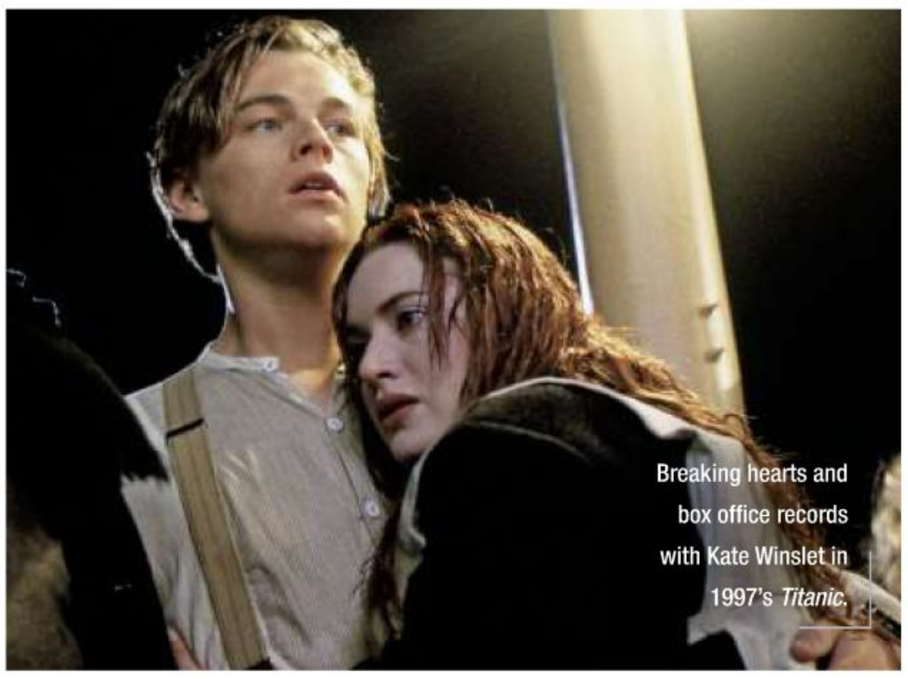


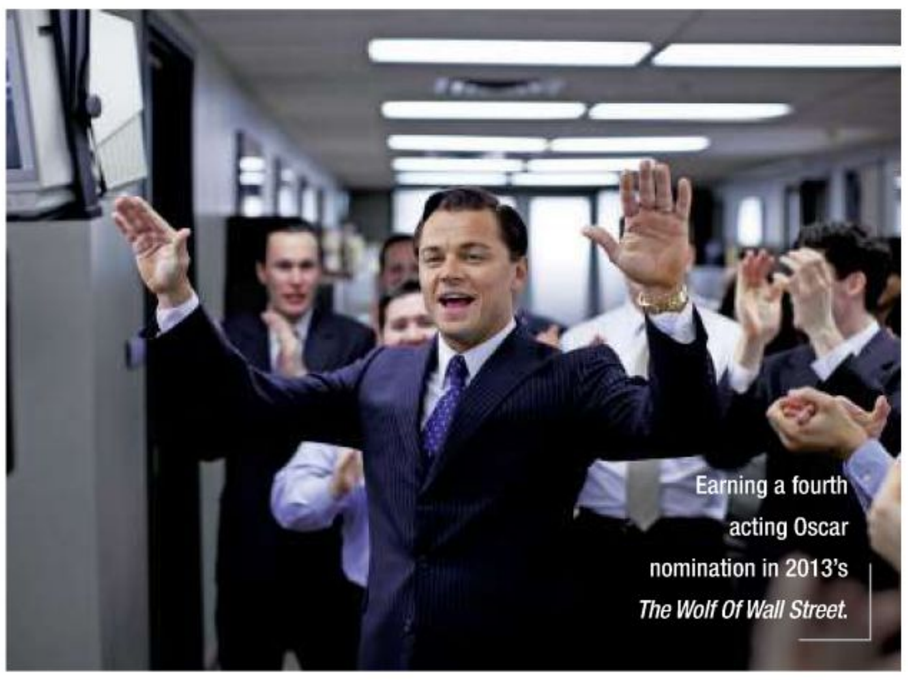
**FOOTNOTES**

❷ Hugh Glass is a genuine 19th-century fur trapper who was attacked by a grizzly. Before setting out after his fellow trappers, he set his own broken leg, and prevented gangrene in an open gash by laying it in a rotting log and letting maggots eat the dead flesh. He was previously portrayed by Richard Harris in *Man In The Wilderness* (1971).



With early acting hero Robert De Niro in 1993's *This Boy's Life.*


Breaking hearts and box office records with Kate Winslet in 1997's *Titanic.*


Earning a fourth acting Oscar nomination in 2013's *The Wolf Of Wall Street.*

**Can you imagine what your career might have been like if you had made that movie?**
I'm not sure anything would have changed. I have the same outlook on movies that I had when I was 15. For whatever reason, whatever I saw from cinema's great history, I said to myself, "Hopefully I will do a movie as good as some of these that I have seen." But I would have been happy to be a working actor, period. Holy shit, I am so lucky. It was only working on *This Boy's Life* with De Niro that gave me the foothold ❹. I would be a complete twat to waste the opportunities that I have been given. To me it is a responsibility in some ways. I don't want to miss out on the opportunities to work with great artists. But the type of movies I want to do has been the same since I was 15.

**Is it fair to say you could work with anyone you want to?**
Listen, nothing is ever easy. Some films are very difficult to pull off. Both *The Aviator* and *The Wolf Of Wall Street* were screenplays that I developed for years. I found the financing for them and luckily got Marty to do both of them. Other ones have been developed by other people... Each one presents its own challenge.

**Still, the list is impressive: Spielberg, Nolan, Luhrmann, Tarantino... What do those experiences mean to you?**
Having worked with Marty, who was a master of film history, Spielberg is essentially the same way, he just chose to do different types of movies. They are both essentially professors of film history. Spielberg has a great love of actors, and gives to actors as Marty does... Chris Nolan is an absolute genius, somebody that has incredible stories locked in his head. As an actor it is amazing to try and dig into his psyche and draw something out during pre-production, because when you get there, you start to see things unfold in ways you never imagined... Baz envelopes you into his world. The way he investigates the Bard, the way he dissects *The Great Gatsby*, the way he is meticulous about everything, not just the actors, but the wallpaper. It is inspiring to be around, I truly love the man... ❸ Tarantino, again: massive cinephile. If Scorsese has seen every movie ever made up until 1980 — which is the rumour — Quentin's seen every B movie ever made up until today. He reminds me of Marty in a lot of ways, too. He's one of those few directors out there that people truly go to because of his name — there are few directors that become household names synonymous with their own style. And Alejandro, in my opinion, has now become one of them.

**You mention Scorsese a lot. Does your relationship with him remain the most significant thing in your career?**
It is like we inherently know each other, but we go off and do our movies. He just did *Silence*, and I did this other film. To me it has been these great chapters in my life, but sometimes we don't speak for long periods of time. It has been beautiful. Even in the hardest films we have done together, and it has been miserable at times, that misery loves company. And there is nobody I would rather be doing these sequences with, and being on set with, than him. He has been so much a part of my adult life. I don't know how I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with him, and I hope to do it a lot more ❻. He has taught me so much about not only cinema's history, and what it is to be an artist and an actor, but the importance of movies.

**Do you have a checklist of directors you want to work with in the future?**
No, I don't have a checklist. There are a lot of directors I would love to work with — Paul Thomas Anderson, Ang Lee — but to me it is always primarily about the character and the screenplay, and it must be something I feel like I can be of service to. I am completely open to doing a romantic comedy, but I never think about what would it mean to popular culture. All I care about as a cinema lover is whether I can get lost in that world. So you want to work with the best. It takes real talent to be able to pull off stylistic choices. To be bold enough to work with great artistry, and not just work with a static shot.

**Which surely sums up everything Alejandro set out to achieve on *The Revenant*.**
What I love about him, and identify with — and it is the same thing that Marty has — is this feeling of being an outsider. He is from Mexico, and he has watched America's cinema history and he is here to make his mark, much like Marty was the New York filmmaker going to Hollywood. They both fight that much harder to achieve what they want. Alejandro is incredibly poetic and his reach is endless in terms of what he wants to accomplish cinematically. He's got this incredibly vivid imagination and he is incredibly stubborn about making sure his artistry is put up on screen. That is the sign of a great filmmaker. He also happens to be incredibly pleasant to be around, which makes it tolerable. But he's been this outsider that has now made his mark... When you see this film, you're going to have seen nothing like it. ❺

***THE REVENANT* IS OUT ON JANUARY 15 AND IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 36.**

**FOOTNOTES**

❸ In 1993 Cameron wrote a 47-page 'scriptment', which potentially pitted DiCaprio's 17 year-old Peter Parker against Arnold Schwarzenegger's Doctor Octopus. It fell apart when Marvel went bust in 1996, but elements ended up in Sam Raimi's 2002 adaptation.

❹ When DiCaprio was nine, and said he wanted to act, his father took him to see Robert De Niro in *Midnight Run*, saying to his son, "You want to know what a great actor is? *This* is a great actor." DiCaprio still calls *This Boy's Life* his "seminal experience".

❺ DiCaprio once met with Luhrmann about *Moulin Rouge!* but was unsure about his singing voice. "It was me and him and a piano player, and we tried to sing a song together," DiCaprio recalls. "When I hit a high note, he just turned to me [and said], 'Yes, D, I don't know if this conversation should continue...'"

❻ DiCaprio has lured Scorsese into a sixth collaboration with an adaptation of Erik Larson's true story *The Devil In The White City*, about a serial killer who haunted the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. "I want to be in that one," DiCaprio enthused to *Variety*. "That one is real." He will play the killer, H. H. Holmes.

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# REVIEW



DECEMBER 31, 2015 — JANUARY 27, 2016 | EDITED *by* NICK DE SEMLYEN



NEW RELEASE

## LEGEND

**Brian Helgeland and Tom Hardy dissect the disturbing allure of Ronnie and Reggie. (p.126)**

ILLUSTRATION **NOMA BAR**

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# Straight Outta Compton — Director's Cut

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **18**

DVD BR

**L. A. STORY**

BEING FORMULAIC isn't always a bad thing. *Straight Outta Compton* doesn't so much tear up the music-biopic sheet as hug it close... before scrawling its own "street knowledge" in the margins.

In a sense, F. Gary Gray's soup-to-nuts N.W.A story is a virtual remake of Oliver Stone's *The Doors*. The era's changed and it's a very different musical genre, but both are epic accounts of ultimately tragic groups who rose up through the fissure of American political division, challenged the prevailing cultural agenda, embraced controversy over their lyrics, and apparently had a moment when one of them noodled on a keyboard for a while before triumphantly coming up with an awesomely catchy riff.

And as if two-and-a-half hours weren't enough for Gray, who worked with producers and former Ns With Attitudes Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, he's now put out this Director's Cut, which clocks in at 163 minutes. In interviews following the theatrical release, Gray had promised that the new version would better address the band's suspect treatment of women (both lyrically and personally), but all we have are a few

It's fair to say the cameraman's joke hadn't gone down too well.




additional scenes displaying tenderness between Dre and Eazy-E and their respective other halves. Otherwise, it is, frankly, all filler no killer.

Not that it fundamentally damages a film which, deservedly, made $200 million against a $28 million budget, opened bigger than *Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation*, and now stands proud as the most successful music biopic ever made (in your face, *Walk The Line*). There were worries that Dre and Cube's close proximity would render it a vanity project — the former was, as the disc's 35-minute 'making of' reveals, on set every day; the latter's own son was cast... as him! But, while it does skew massively positive, with an end-credits montage which leaves us in no doubt as to how hugely successful Cube and Dre have been, their involvement gives it a powerful sense of autobiographical authenticity. It's something that's bolstered by astonishing performances from its mostly unknown cast (yes, including Cube's son, O'Shea Jackson Jr.), and the rooting of the shoot in real South Central locations. As the on-screen gang are told early on by one hilariously clueless naysayer, "Nobody wants to hear this reality rap shit." Well, it's the reality as much as the rap that makes this rise above the formula. **DAN JOLIN**

LIKE THIS, WATCH THIS



**FRIDAY**

1995

**At one point in *Straight Outta Compton* you see Ice Cube typing away at the script for this amiable comedy, in which he also stars. They'd make a solid meta double bill.**

ALSO OUT



## The Man From U. N. C. L. E.

★★★

DVD BR

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12**

→ They're a "higher class of action hero", as the disc's sole extra claims, but disappointing box office suggests 'class' wasn't what was wanted. Still, there's enough to enjoy in Guy Ritchie's slick revamp of the '60s spy show, not least fractious, world-saving odd couple Henry Cavill and Armie Hammer. **DJ**



## Ricki And The Flash

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12**

DVD BR

→ Family crises, mooning over the '60s and Meryl in dreads belting out *American Girl*: we've missed Jonathan Demme. And this tragicomedy about a runaway rocker-chick returning to deal with her daughter's meltdown is bang in his comfort zone. Meryl Streep never lets Ricki's humanity slip, offering a headstrong but heart-sore fuck-up. **IN**



## Everest

★★★

FROM **JANUARY 19** / CERT. **12**

DVD BR

→ A star-studded account of one of the worst disasters in climbing history, this sees hubris, greed and bad weather doom two tour groups attempting to scale Everest's peak. The performances are good and effects convincing, but the film fails to capture the almost spiritual drive that leads people to take on the highest point on the planet. **HOH**



Cray-cray Krays.

# Legend

★★★

FROM **JANUARY 18** / CERT. **18**

DVD BR

## FIFTY SHADES OF KRAY

WHO GIVES THE better performance, Tom Hardy or Tom Hardy? It's a tribute to the meaty charisma the British heavyweight brings to his dual performances as the identikit gangland beefs who lorded it over '60s London how swiftly you forget it's the same actor, or bother to ponder how he shares scenes so seamlessly with himself. Given the volatile Ronnie Kray is a paranoid schizophrenic, sniffing each new scene for provocation, you could say Hardy gives at least three performances. Even Reggie, the outwardly sane business end of the operation, has his dark side. As Reggie's girl Frances (Emily Browning) flatly points out in her voice-over, "Should it be needed, violence was on offer." A fair description of *Legend*.

In a way, Brian Helgeland has made two movies. The first, the Reggie movie, is an enjoyably jaunty if ultra-violent '60s crime caper. It's the rise and fall of a glamorous thug, the kind of role Michael Caine might have been tempted by back in his handsome pomp. With the thickset East End bullyboy swizzling toffs and doling out savage stabbings, Helgeland prints the legend, and Hardy does him proud.

Yet there are hints they aspire to more. This is the twitchy, discomforting, underdeveloped Ronnie movie, probing the myth for Scorsese's humanising detail. Given it's Frances telling the tale, it's a legend draped in bitterness. Browning is good as Reggie's dreamy wife-to-be, enamoured by his excitement and ambition, disgusted by what it hides. And given her own "fragile", pill-salved psyche, strangely alike to Ronnie, her great rival for his affections.

There are just-touched-upon Freudian levels to the brothers' relationship, hints their bond flirted with something Lannister. And it's too irresistible not to interpret the Kray-complex as two sides of a single brain, East End id and West End ego. When the inevitable brotherly spat turns into a technically auspicious bar brawl, you do wonder what was going through Hardy's head.

A rasp of sarcasm clings to the title. "You're like Ford, Shell or Woolworths," sneers slippery business associate Leslie Payne (David Thewlis) of the brothers' notoriety. The Krays became a brand, a legend worth a cool £18 million at the UK box office. In other words, this could have been a better film, but maybe not a bigger hit. **IAN NATHAN**

LIKE THIS, WATCH THIS




**DEAD RINGERS**

(1988)

David Cronenberg's trippy thriller casts Jeremy Irons as twin brothers, both gynaecologists in Toronto. Irons had two separate dressing rooms, one for each character.

ALSO OUT



## 45 Years

★★★★

FROM **JANUARY 11** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ The erosion of a distant glacier drives a 50 year-old wedge into Tom Courtenay and Charlotte Rampling's marriage in this subtle drama, which burns as slowly as its antagonistic ice field melts. Acting royalty do justice to Andrew Haigh's devastating script, which refuses to take sides in the delicate moral skirmish. **NA**



## Sinister 2

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ 2012's *Sinister* knew that, when it comes to horror lore, less is usually more. Strange, then, that this second part is so bombastic. Families are eaten by alligators; mouths are mutilated with drills. It's perfectly acceptable Friday-night fright-shite, but where the first film was a highpoint of modern Hollywood horror, this is largely forgettable. **JM**



## The Diary Of A Teenage Girl

★★★★

DVD

FROM **JANUARY 11** / CERT. **18**

→ Funny, frank and filthy, this look at adolescent life in '70s San Francisco stars Bel Powley as Minnie (15), who seduces her mother's boyfriend to leap headlong into adult life. With no easy moralising and vibrant, messy characters, this is one of the freshest coming-of-age stories in years. **HOH**



# Fantastic Four

★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12**

DVD BR

**FLOPTASTIC BORE**

As *Fantastic Four* hit cinemas, director Josh Trank announced on Twitter that, a year earlier, he'd had a "fantastic version" of the film, one that "would've received great reviews". This home-ent release, it's safe to say, does not offer that film.

Indeed, barring the existence of roughly 90 minutes of unused material, it's hard to imagine how any director's cut could salvage the morose, joy-sucking delirium that is *Fantastic Four*. If Tim Story's adaptation was a fizzpop bubblegum take on Marvel's first family, then Trank's is a smack overdose in a tenement stairwell. Gloomy and humourless, this cinematic comedown meshes pseudo-science with rote action, knitted together with middling CGI.



**Top:** Miles Teller wishes he was drumming. **Above:** Jamie Bell rocks out as The Thing.

The bright young cast are criminally underserved by their dialogue, and when the nihilistic third act comes to a merciful close, it's hard not to imagine that Dr. Doom's plan to suck Earth into a crushing vortex might have come as a blessed relief to all involved.

Sadly, a warts-and-all exposé is not among the special features, the extras being very much a Trank-less task. The lone featurette restricts itself to the 'safe' topic of the foursome's various powers, presumably leaving the real story behind this disastrous production buried and sealed for all time. **JAMES DYER**



# PEEP SHOW SERIES 1-9

★★★★★

2003-2015 / FROM **NOW** / CERT. **18**

DVD

**SUBMERSE YOURSELF IN 12 GLORIOUSLY CRINGEY YEARS OF MARK AND JEREMY**

CREATING A GREAT sitcom is hard. Keeping the quality up is even harder. But sticking the landing, crafting an ending that works for characters and fans alike, is hardest of all. Damned near impossible, in fact. For every *Blackadder Goes Forth*, which found genuine poignancy among the one-liners, there's a *How I Met Your Mother*, mangling its legacy with a ham-fisted attempt at fan service. Even *Seinfeld* blew it in spectacular fashion with that ill-judged trial plot.

No such problems, though, for *Peep Show* which, with its ninth and final season, nailed it with a finale that was as beautifully misanthropic, venal and sharply written as anything in the show's run.

Was there ever any doubt that it would deliver? Sam Bain, Jesse Armstrong and Andrew O'Connor's creation never really garnered any of the plaudits that came the way of, say, *The Office* or *Spaced*, while it will forever be known as the launchpad for David Mitchell and Robert Webb's gradual takeover of every TV channel in the country. But it is undeniably a classic sitcom, one of the best produced in this country over the last two decades.

Not bad for a show that could have been just a gimmick. The idea of *Peep Show*, if you haven't seen it before now (and if you haven't, sorry about spoiling the ending later on in this review; but that sort of crushing disappointment happens every five minutes in a *Peep Show* episode, so consider it a primer) is that we see the events unfold from the POV of its characters, while we're privy to the inner thoughts of Mitchell's Mark and Webb's Jeremy in voiceover form. It's a cracking idea, but one which could so easily have gone awry (check out the failed US pilot,

**Above:** Mark (David Mitchell) and Jeremy (Robert Webb): "idiots". **Below:** Olivia Colman's Sophie, Mark's lover/nemesis.





The pair's lusted-after neighbour, Toni (Elizabeth Marmur).



Jeremy's short-lived wife, New Ager Nancy (Rachel Blanchard).



Super Hans (Matt King): Jeremy's drug-addled band-mate.



Alan Johnson (Paterson Joseph) with Big Suze (Sophie Winkleman).



IT whizz Dobby (Isy Suttie), who also turns Mark's head.

starring Johnny Galecki, on YouTube for horrifying proof). In the hands of Bain and Armstrong, the principal writers on the show's 54-episode run, the chance to unleash the things we think but almost never say became a wonderful comedic device — not since Shakespeare have asides been this acidic.

As stylistically slick as the show became over the years (compare the tentative first episode with the confidence of the last), the writing has never withered, never lost its edge, never stopped delivering quotable gems (perhaps the greatest of them all: "That crack is really moreish," from Matt King's drug-addled Super Hans).

Many sitcoms flounder and soften when faced with the pressure to acknowledge the passing years and have its characters learn and, worst of all, grow as people. Character development can often be the enemy of comedy, but *Peep Show* dealt with that adroitly by largely avoiding it. Yes, Mark and Jeremy — particularly Mark — have dealt with getting older (not for nothing is the final episode set around Jeremy's 40th), jobs (promotions, demotions and sackings), love, marriage, death, sexuality, divorce and babies. But by the show's end, they're still essentially the same idiots we met in the first episode: the vainglorious Jeremy may have branched out into bisexuality, but he's still spectacularly dense, the kind of man who can instigate a dinner-party discussion about Jesus armed with not one single fact; while Mark, one of sitcom's great Don Quixote figures, remains forever frustrated by his own inadequacies.

The supporting characters were always incredibly strong and well-drawn (it's the show that put newfound national treasure Olivia Colman on the map), but Bain and Armstrong knew that the stars of the show were always Mitchell and Webb, the real-life BFFs. So it feels entirely right that the final series doesn't end with a race to a church, or the resolution of a long, tedious will-they/won't-they affair, but slowly strips away all other characters, from Super Hans to Colman's Sophie and Paterson Joseph's magnificent strutting peacock, Alan Johnson, leaving Mark and Jeremy — the El Dude Brothers — right back where we met them in 2003: sitting in a shitty flat in Croydon, hating each other but doomed never to be apart, a *Steptoe And Son* for a modern era. And *that's* how you stick a landing. **CHRIS HEWITT**

## ALSO OUT



### The X-Files: The Collector's Set

★★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **18** BR

→ X-philes, rejoice: it's finally made it to HD. You could use this set to bone up before the new series, but you'd end up mad and muttering about bees. Best to dip into the standalones, a stream of perfect horror mini-movies that lob everything from vampires to toilet goblins at our ice-cool heroes. **NDS**



### Toast Of London: Series 3

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD

→ This third hit of the wildly silly cult joy sees Britain's most erratic voiceover talent revealing that the moon landings were faked live on *Lorraine*, running into some bother with "the feminists" and struggling to get Peter Davison to do the washing-up. This could just be the funniest thing on the telly-vis-eon. **PDS**



### Doctor Who: Series 9 Part 2

★★★

FROM **JANUARY 4** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ While the second half of this latest series continued the impressive use of two-parters, there was also room for an emotional farewell to Jenna Coleman's Clara, and the format-shifting *Heaven Sent*. It didn't all work — *Sleep No More* tried and failed at found-footage — but this was confident, fun *Who*. **JW**

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PHOTOGRAPHY **MARCO VITTUR**

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## DOCTOR HUH?

We don't know why cult US artist Brandon Bird has made a poster depicting Shia LaBeouf as every Doctor Who. But we're very glad that he has. Wait for the inevitable live video stream of LaBeouf staring at it for 72 hours.

brandonbird.com, £6.65




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Playing cards depicting characters from classic fantasy-comedy *The Princess Bride*? Inconceivable! Well, no, they clearly were conceivable, because here they are, beautifully illustrated and festooned with quotes.

firebox.com, £12.99

ALSO OUT



## Dope

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD

→ A true original, *Dope* mashes up college comedy, crime thriller and awkward romance. It also features ill-advised mid-road dancing. Shameik Moore is the geeky kid from Inglewood who stumbles upon a stash of ecstasy; the resulting tale, as he dodges nefarious types, is full of personality and visual élan. **NDS**



## The Transporter Refuelled

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ There's a sense that unleaded has been put into the diesel tank of this powerfully ridiculous action reboot. High on action but low on logic, it sees courier Frank Martin (now played by Ed Skrein) blackmailed by former prostitutes into rescuing his father. Skrein gives it his all, but we miss The Stath. **JN**



## The Visit

★★★

FROM **JANUARY 18** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ With a sphincter-scrunching twist at its high point and a rap about pineapple upside-down cake at its low, M. Night Shyamalan's gerontophobic horror sits at the more demented end of the found-footage spectrum. Both horribly creepy and blackly comic, this isn't quite a return to form but is Shyamalan's best film in a while. **JD**




## WHERE TO FIND ICONIC LOCATIONS FROM TV AND FILM

WORDS **HELEN O'HARA**




**The Boondock Saints (1999)** The Liberty Hotel

If you're looking for somewhere luxurious after your tramp around Beantown, head for The Liberty. Ironically given that name, it was originally the Charles Street Jail, which played the high-security prison where Billy Connolly's Il Duce was held in this none-more-'90s cult favourite.




**The Town (2010)** 15 Monument Square, Charlestown

Ben Affleck's armed robber traces Rebecca Hall's bank clerk back home to this handsome brownstone house. She must be a pretty wealthy clerk, because this has a view directly onto the Revolutionary War's Bunker Hill Monument, one of the most recognisable landmarks in Boston.




**The Departed (2006)** Erich Lindemann Mental Health Center, Hurley Building

If you're a fan of Brutalist architecture and/or Mark Wahlberg swearing, this government building is the one for you. Handily located on the way from the Bunker Hill Monument back to downtown, it played the police HQ exterior in Martin Scorsese's police remake.




**Black Mass (2015)** Revere Beach

Just because you're in New England doesn't mean you can't sun yourself. Revere Beach, four miles from downtown Boston, plays Miami in the Johnny Depp-starring gangster film, and while the palm trees and Cuban café signs were brought in for the occasion, the beach itself is pretty without them — just a little colder.

MORE OF THIS MONTH'S NEW RELEASES

# Also out




## 99 Homes

★★★★

FROM **JANUARY 18** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Michael Shannon reveals the latest of his line in magnificent bastards — corrupt real-estate broker Rick Carver, a merciless entrepreneur feeding off foreclosed Florida properties. Andrew Garfield is his match as the recently evicted builder Carver takes under his slippery wing in Ramin Bahrani's raging, righteous and thrilling take on the financial crisis fall-out. **ES**



## Aaaaaaaah!

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **18**

→ Steve Oram's *Aaaaaaaah!* (eight As, we checked) is a low-budget comedy in which humans (including Oram, Julian Barratt and Noel Fielding) talk and act like apes. It's the surreal bastard son of John Waters and David Lynch, filled with sights (a man ejaculating on a picture of Prince Harry; Toyah Willcox crapping on the floor) you won't shift for weeks. **CH**



## Hitman: Agent 47

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Yet another reboot few were asking for, this follows super-clone Agent 47's efforts to prevent the creation of a more efficient genetically enhanced army. Rupert Friend has a touch of the T-1000 about him, but his iconic computer-game assassin is only intimidating until opening his mouth. Slick action and Zachary Quinto aside, Agent 47 is all filler, no killer. **ET**



## Just Jim

★★★

FROM **JANUARY 4** / CERT. **15** DVD

→ Tagging it "A Craig Roberts Film" may sound like a premature bid for auteur status, but this is a largely assured debut from the *Submarine* actor. Roberts plays a reclusive Welsh teenager with a missing dog and unwelcome help from the volatile American next door (Emile Hirsch). The result is a Cymru noir told with Ayoade-like deadpan. **PDS**



## The Wolfpack

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ This stranger-than-fiction doc from debut director Crystal Moselle introduces us to the Angulo brothers, raised in near total isolation in the midst of Manhattan. Patriarch Oscar casts a sinister shadow from which the siblings' exuberant movie re-enactments provide welcome relief, while Moselle's unobtrusive style captures the clan's journey into the light. **ES**



## No Escape

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ This *Raid*-style actioner casts Owen Wilson as the target of machete maniacs in an unspecified Asian country. It's trashy pulp full of silly coincidences and will please xenophobes, but also a surprisingly effective sweaty-palms-inducer. Wilson and screen wife Lake Bell sell the panic, and it's hard to resist Pierce Brosnan yelling, "Come to papa, fucker!" **NDS**



## Me And Earl And The Dying Girl

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ The story of a budding filmmaker who befriends a fellow student when she's diagnosed with the Big C, Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's inventive tale avoids mawkishness and the smaller C — cliché. There's much fun in the recreations of classic films (*A Sockwork Orange*, anyone?), before a climax that is moving and beautiful. **CH**



## Vacation

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ A sequel to, and near-remake of, the original Chevy Chase comedy, this sees Ed Helms' grown Rusty Griswold lead his own family cross-country in search of a closer bond. It's wildly uneven, swerving between bad-taste gags and charming family moments. But aside from a fun Chris Hemsworth cameo, little sets it apart from the original and it feels overlong. **HOH**



## The Bad Education Movie

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ This sitcom-on-holiday adaptation of the BBC Three hit is essentially a parade of sketches, each more vulgar than the last. As irresponsible secondary-school teacher Mr. Wickers, Jack Whitehall spends a good third of the movie with his trousers round his ankles, and should really have his CRB certificate revoked. Makes *The Inbetweeners* look like *The Good Life*. **JN**



# ADVENTURES IN STREAMING

**EACH ISSUE, OUR INTREPID WRITER FOLLOWS NETFLIX'S COMPUTER-CALIBRATED RECOMMENDATIONS, GOING WHEREVER THE TRAIL LEADS**

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**



## Nicolas Cage

BUILT INTO NETFLIX'S search vaults is a select-an-actor feature that lets you career-stalk a star. This month's test subject: the electric, erratic Nicolas Cage, who once dubbed his operatic acting style 'Nouveau Shamanic'. I'd argue his recent CV's been more Nou-woe Shambolic, but as a fan, you're always primed for that flash of fearless genius. This Cage-a-thon reveals two quirks: no other Hollywood actor has covered as many genres. And no other actor has such a fondness for stupid names. Let us Cage...



First up: ***Season Of The Witch***, a period fantasy clunker that casts Cage as a Teutonic knight escorting a witch to an exorcism. Having owned two Gothic castles and America's most haunted house, Cage has a sincere interest in the supernatural. Hence his over-earnest faith in hokey material (never mind the CG wolf-attacks — Claire Foy's witch escapes so many times it could've been retitled *Get That Hag*). The film's styled like a medieval theme-park tour, but the uncanniest thing here is that, with the goatee and frizzly poodle-hair, Cage appears to be channelling Nickelback's Chad Kroeger. Stupid Cage name: Behmen von Bleibruck.



Shot in 1995, Barbet Schroeder's ***Kiss Of Death*** was intended as a star vehicle for David Caruso. Cage, his nemesis, is ninth down the bill. "Fuck with the bull, you get the horns," Cage warns Caruso. Soon enough, Caruso's the china shop to Cage's raging ham. As Schroeder plonks out his three-chord noir, Cage reinvents cinematic villainy as freeform-jazz solo — a pogo-ing, malevolent human cartoon, fizzing with flourishes only Cage would dare attempt. Little Junior Brown (hello, stupid Cage name) only uses plastic cutlery because he hates the taste of silver — an outrageous hint at the blue-collar werewolf within. Be prepared: this is, without question, one of his great lost performances.



Still, how about this for algorithm voodoo? Having witnessed Cage hijack an entire movie, Netflix offers up ***Trespass***: this time, *he's* the hostage, defending his family against crackhead raiders. At first, there's asphyxiating tension. Then the plot-twists hit, like bricks through a window. With Joel Schumacher assembling his film from a home-invasion flatpack, only Cage embraces the B movie he's in. It's less a performance, more a series of over-reactions. When he discovers wife Nicole Kidman's been having an affair with one of the robbers, the response is pure, priceless Cage Rage ("*Your filthy lust invited them in!*"). Shame the script can't be arsed to give him a stupid name. Kyle Miller? C'mon! He's got fishbowl spectacles! An Oompa-Loopa tan! I spend most of the movie toying with names to match the character. Benson Carat, maybe? Rhombus McBingo? Dallas Thwerpelhammer?



***Joe*** proves Cage is still a force. David Gordon Green's redneck gothic marks not just a return to indie drama, but a Cage speciality: for whatever reason, he's *the* master of nihilistic characters. Here, his Texan logger plays surrogate dad to Tye Sheridan's drifter. A dormant volcano in an oppressive wasteland of abuse, Cage slowly unpeels a portrait of suppressed male rage, emotional isolation and steaming self-destruction. The impact of his performance lingers like a damaged ghost — resulting, for my money, in his most soulful, haunting work since *Leaving Las Vegas*. Surprisingly, there's still room for a Stupid Cage Name: Joe's surname is Ransom. Joe Ransom. He just can't resist them, can he?



Then disaster strikes. Apocalyptic Godbuster ***Left Behind*** imagines the Rapture as spiritual alien abduction — the blessed evaporate leaving a crumple of clothes, suggesting heaven is a sanctimonious nudist colony. Cage is piloting a jet when salvation strikes and he spends most of his screentime in the cockpit, hiding from the rest of the movie. Imagine an airport-disaster spoof without the laughs. The preachy script is like being whacked on the head by an End Is Nigh placard, the drama fundamentally flawed. If all non-Christians are doomed to eternal hellfire, why bother surviving? A vintage Cage would've gone out in style and crashed the jet into a popcorn factory. Here he looks dosed. There's a stupid name (Rayford Steele), but it's a serious faith-test for any Cage fan. See *Joe*. Discover *Kiss Of Death*. But *Left Behind*? Forget, flush fast and run away.

• ILLUSTRATION: PETER STRAIN

## NEW TO STREAMING

# The Ridiculous 6

★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **15**

N

### UN-MAGNIFICENT



THE NATIVE American people have suffered any number of indignities over the years. But they haven't, until now, suffered Adam Sandler. The comedy titan's latest movie, released exclusively by Netflix in the first of a four-picture deal, blunders into a sensitive subject with all the gentle caution of stampeding bison. Female characters are called Smoking Fox, Never Wears Bra and, um, Beaver Breath. The pun "Poca-hot-tits" is deployed. There are wince-inducing jokes about peace pipes and wigwams. But other ethnicities won't feel left out — Rob Schneider plays a stupid Mexican with a diarrhoea-spraying donkey. We have the feeling Donald Trump has added *The Ridiculous 6* to his 'To Watch' list.

The Western spoof features six leads. Sandler is White Knife, doing a Man With No Name riff that's more The Man With No Shame. Taylor Lautner is Lil' Pete, a cantaloupe-fucking, three-nippled halfwit. Jorge Garcia is Herm, a Hagrid-esque oaf. Luke Wilson is Danny, a gunslinger with a secret. Terry Crews is Chico, who can play the piano with his penis. And Schneider is Ramon — but enough about him.

Spanning a punishing two-hour run-time (only eight minutes shorter than *The Magnificent Seven*, but with several more references to "weenie pee-pee"), the adventure takes many detours. These include the sight of Harvey Keitel being menaced by an evil doll, and the astonishing spectacle that is Vanilla Ice playing Mark Twain, pitching his new book to David Spade's General Custer with the words, "White boy goes raftin' with a brother. People gonna lose their shit!"

> You know a Western's bad when even the horses have run away.

Netflix has clearly given Sandler and director Frank Coraci (*Zookeeper*) a budget at least as generous as those they've been accustomed to. There are Monument Valley vistas and cameos from the likes of Danny Trejo and Steve Buscemi. But the latter, as a barber with a disgustingly all-purpose cream, provides oases of humour in a desert that's otherwise largely arid. The good news: thanks to the fact the film is skipping cinemas and coming direct to Netflix, you can schedule as many *Hateful Eight*-style intermissions as you like. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

## ALSO STREAMING



### BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

N

Before you watch Kurt Russell go Wild West in *The Hateful Eight*, see him battle dark Eastern forces as trucker Jack Burton in this '80s classic. All together: "Everybody relax... I'm here."

FROM JANUARY 1, CERT. 15



### TOUCH OF EVIL

N

Orson Welles' Mexico noir is a darker proposition than *Citizen Kane*, with a horrific scene in a motel involving Janet Leigh (two years before she had an even worse one in *Psycho*) and Welles as leering villain Hank Quinlan.

FROM JANUARY 1, CERT. 12



### SHERLOCK S3

A

With Series 4 not expected to air until 2017, Sherlockites and Watsonheads have plenty of time to pore over the existing episodes. This batch features a terrifying blackmailer and a rather tense wedding reception.

FROM JANUARY 1, CERT. 12



### ARGO

A

Ben Affleck is uncaped crusader Tony Mendez, a CIA exfiltration specialist determined to get American hostages out of Iran in 1979. A triple-Oscar-winner, it's both phenomenally tense and frequently funny.

FROM JANUARY 8, CERT. 15



### PAPER PLANES

SS

Not the one with Cara Delevingne, but a heartwarming family film in which an Australian boy dreams of competing in the World Paper Plane Championships in Japan. At no point features the rapping of M.I.A..

FROM JANUARY 25, CERT. U



### JOHN WICK

SM

A hitman's dog is killed. So he kills 84 people. There's not much more going on plot-wise, but this is one of the best action films in years, with Keanu Reeves serving up generous portions of gun-fu.

FROM JANUARY 29, CERT. 15



### KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE

SM

The spikiest spy movie of 2015, Matthew Vaughn's thriller features scenarios — and anal-sex jokes — that would make 007 blanch. And the final set-piece is madder than a killer bowler hat.

FROM JANUARY 1, CERT. 15




# Bad Boys I & II: 20th Anniversary Collection

★★★

**1995-2003** / FROM **JANUARY 25** / CERT. **18**

BR

## MIAMI TWICE

IN FEBRUARY 2017, *Bad Boys 3* will crash into cinemas, with or without Will Smith. Could be a Next Gen reboot. Could be a *Bad Babies* prequel. Could be set in space. Who knows, but this double bill indicates what the producers should be aiming for: recapture original, reverse over sequel.

Shot 20 years ago, it's easy to forget *Bad Boys* was a career bazooka for '90s TV talent — Michael Bay was a pop-video director, Smith and Martin Lawrence sitcom stars. The film that launched them is like a final roar from the '80s buddy-cop cycle — an unashamed cliché pile-up complete with nightclub shoot-outs, ball-busting captain (Joe Pantoliano) and a fruity Euro villain (Tchéky Karyo). What remains fresh is its something-to-prove energy. The character-clash of loose cannon and family guy is brazen formula, but Smith and Lawrence zing like a dream. They were so well-cast, in fact, that much of the banter's improvised.

Surprisingly for a debut, Bay's signatures are on full display: the "frame-fuck" cutting, the fetish for machinery, and an eye that sees the world in Sunny Delight orange. It is what it is: *Miami Vice* through a fat '90s boombox, and one of the last blasts of pre-CGI action cinema. The climax presents an exploding aircraft hangar raining $100 bills.







That's the stunt budget cooked before your very eyes. Only in a Simpson/Bruckheimer production.

*Bad Boys*' standout car chase features barrels exploding from an ice-cream van. Part two, which came eight years later, reinvents it as the franchise action beat, not once, but twice: first, with a car transporter hurling motors down a freeway, then, an hour later, with corpses tossed from a morgue truck. (This is played as comedy.) The former is gaspingly great and Bay's definitive action-gasm. The latter reeks of grotesque desperation. You expect excess from a sequel, but *Bad Boys II* blasts the bigger-better-bangier model to extinction. The plot centres on a batch of killer ecstasy. After two-and-a-half hours of prime Bay, you feel like you've been spiked by the stuff. Declaring all-out war on storytelling, it's more a continuous strobe of set-pieces, with narrative shrapnel flying out.

The surprise is a flat-battery Smith and Lawrence: if you're wondering where the warm rapport's gone, it's because they're now playing the same character. Aim two loose cannons at each other and they self-destruct. "That's funny shit!" shouts Smith to remind you a joke's just happened. It's all a bit sad. Despite the aggressive smack and zing, the overwhelming sense is of hyperactive stodge that denigrates the buddy-cop genre it once revitalised. It lumbers and pants, like a fat cop running through traffic. **SIMON CROOK**

**Clockwise from above left:** Top volume from Bad Boys Martin Lawrence and Will Smith in the first film; Téa Leoni as *Bad Boys*' key witness, call girl Julie Mott; *Bad Boys II* out-WTFs the first film's exploding ice-cream van; The loose cannons get looser and more cannon-y in part two.

ALSO OUT



## Kiss Of The Spider Woman

★★★★

FROM **JANUARY 25** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Two prisoners — a gay child-molester who dreams of a life more glamorous (William Hurt) and a furious political prisoner (Raúl Juliá) — form a complicated bond in an initially stagey two-hander that expands into a moving love story, a slow dance between brutal reality and dreamy magic. **OR**



## Infernal Affairs

★★★★★

**2002** / FROM **DECEMBER 31** / CERT. **15** BR

→ Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's high-concept thriller sees twin moles — one among the Triads, one in the police — try to smoke each other out before their cover is blown. Tony Leung and Andy Lau are flawless, and there's as much emotion as action as the two struggle to retain their identities. Even better than remake *The Departed*. **HOH**



## Day Of The Outlaw

★★★★

**1959** / FROM **NOW** / CERT. **PG** DVD BR

→ André De Toth's bleak Western is part siege movie, part survival tale. The first half paints Robert Ryan's Wyoming cattle-man as a bullying antihero; the second finds him shedding the 'anti' part as he tackles Burl Ives' band of brigands in a snowdrift. An underseen gem, watch it as a wintry primer for *The Revenant* and *The Hateful Eight*. **PDS**

"An achingly human, true and irresistibly sad tale."

# The Last Picture Show

1971 / OUT **NOW** / CERT. **15**

DVD

## LONE STAR


1


2


3

IF ALL THE DIRECTORS DEEMED harbingers of New Hollywood in the 1970s, Peter Bogdanovich's career is perhaps the most frustrating. A prickly, perfectionist ex-film critic boasting an encyclopedic knowledge of cinema — he claimed to have seen well over 5,000 films by the time he was 30 — he quit his job as programmer for New York's Museum Of Modern Art in the early '60s and headed West. There, his reverence for Hollywood's aristocracy quickly opened doors. Orson Welles became a mentor; there were breakfasts with Fritz Lang. Inevitably he ran across Roger Corman, and made his debut with curio *Targets* (1968), which stitched leftovers from 1963's *The Terror* into new footage featuring a ragged Boris Karloff.

Desperate to make up for time he felt he'd lost in New York, Bogdanovich hadn't even read Larry McMurtry's novel *The Last Picture Show* when he signed on to direct its adaptation, and was initially dubious when he did. What did he have in common with these Texan hayseeds, heroes of a coming-of-age tale set in a small, rotting Texan town? His masterstroke was to see that the book could be transformed into a requiem not just for a generation but also a kind of filmmaking, the classic Hollywood movies that he cherished and which were fast themselves becoming relics.

Shot in pellucid black-and-white by legendary DP Robert Surtees, *The Last Picture Show* is an achingly human rumination on a vanishing age. It dodges the candy-coloured sentiment of George Lucas' near-contemporary *American Graffiti* in favour of something truer and irresistibly sad. With its charting of the love-affairs and minor tragedies of a dust-blasted small town in the '50s, the most obvious reference point is 1957's *Peyton Place*, but it has none of the Lana Turner vehicle's Technicolor sudsiness. At the story's heart are Sonny (Timothy Bottoms, pensive underneath a mop of curly hair) and best friend Duane (Jeff Bridges, whose handsome recklessness is boosted by a 100-megawatt smile). Both fall for peachy ingénue Jacy, played by a perfectly cast Cybill Shepherd. Meanwhile, Sonny conducts an affair with the high-school coach's wife (Cloris Leachman).

Though *The Last Picture Show* boasts the sexual frankness of the French New Wave films that were transfixing American filmmakers of the time, Bogdanovich eschewed the cerebral self-consciousness of many of the trail-blazing Europeans in favour of the classicism of Ford and Hawks. In homage to his heroes — pioneers who had profoundly influenced the European avant-garde in the first place — his production office bore a sign proclaiming, "The best films are made in Hollywood!"

Bogdanovich and McMurtry leavened the lean screenplay with deftly judged wit. The high-school football team that Sonny and Duane play for is a constant embarrassment, while a teacher's reading of Keats to a bored class prompts Sonny's eye (and Bogdanovich's camera) to gaze out of the open window, where a pair of dogs hump in the blazing sun. The confusion and yearning of adolescence has never been better or more painfully captured, while a sense of imminent loss, of life and hope slipping away, suffuses the film.

Cloris Leachman, with a thin, worried face straight out of Grant Wood's painting *American Gothic*, and Western stalwart Ben Johnson, whose weathered features and air of quiet nobility seem to have walked, unaltered, out of some undiscovered Ford movie, deservedly won Oscars, but everybody is on career-best form. Eileen Brennan crackles as waitress Genevieve, all sass and chewing-gum. Ellen Burstyn is magnificent as Jacy's mother, frustrated, sophisticated and marooned, a whisky and ice near permanently affixed to her hand. The most thankless role is perhaps Bridges', but still he has moments of celluloid sublimity, such as when nerves lead to a failed deflowering and he walks out of a tatty motel room past Jacy's friends, lined up in their Fords and waiting for details of the big non-event. Meanwhile, period-specific pop seeps out of car radios or blares from jukeboxes, a crackling echo of a distant, unimaginable world.

Excepting Bridges, such artistic success would rarely be achieved again. Timothy Bottoms' career inexplicably failed to reflect his talent, while, *Taxi Driver* aside, Cybill Shepherd's highest-profile subsequent achievement would be TV's *Moonlighting*. Bogdanovich's first great picture show would also turn out to be his last. The control, precision and seemingly effortless emotional depth he conjures here would all but desert him. His follow-up, *What's Up Doc?*, a sprightly attempt to revive screwball comedy, flopped. *Texasville*, a sequel set 30 years later, was clearly a risk, and duly disappointed. *The Last Picture Show* proved to be an artistic high-point that slipped away, blown into the wilderness like tumbleweed in a Texan dust-storm. And if the film doesn't, and it will, that alone should make you weep.

1 Sonny Crawford (Timothy Bottoms) with best friend/love rival Duane Jackson (Jeff Bridges).
2 Cybill Shepherd as Jacy in a striking film debut.
3 Cloris Leachman's Ruth turns to Sonny for solace.

WORDS
**ADAM SMITH**

THE MONTH'S BIGGEST RE-RELEASES

# Archive

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**

## Cherry 2000

1987

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **15**
BR

→ After breaking his love-bot in the bath, a yuppie goes looking for parts in a *Mad Max*-esque wasteland. Yep, the bath. This only-in-the-'80s sex-toy sci-fi quest also features Melanie Griffiths as a mercenary with incredible mushroom-cloud hair. Post-apocalyptic cheese abounds, but if bazookas in quarries are your thing, hunt it down.

## The Dark Corner

1946

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **PG**
DVD

**→ Before the '50s sitcoms, Lucille Ball lived another life as a studio B--queen. Her pert secretary supplies the only light in this thick, smoky manhunt noir about a hunted private eye. Ball's great. Co-star Mark Stevens has the aura of a discount Gary Cooper. Lurking in the shadows are some surprisingly merciless twists.**

## Dark Tide

2012

★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **15**
BR

→ To South Africa's Shark Alley and a gummy *Jaws*-a-like with all the bite of a prawn. As Halle Berry's cage-dive turns into a disaster, the real shark-attack footage should be nerve-thrashing, but never has a Great White looked so beige. The drama's soapy, the action nonsensical. Berry's too good for this. Watching it is like surfing porridge.

## The Friends Of Eddie Coyle

1973

★★★



FROM
**JANUARY 25**
CERT. **15**
DVD BR

**→ In his twilight roles, Robert Mitchum mastered the broken hard-man. Eddie Coyle is prime Bob: a crumpled, belligerent, small-time snitch unwisely ratting on a band of bank-robbers. The wintery Boston setting and Peter Yates' all-business direction add a cold, hard edge to its vortex of double-crosses. Tough, gritty and gripping stuff.**

## A New Leaf

1971

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **PG**
DVD BR

→ Walter Matthau is a skint playboy, Elaine May his frumpy fiancée. Bump her off and he's back in the money. Part fruity farce, part sour class satire, the tone never quite gels, but Matthau — the don of deadpan — is on petulant form as the huffy man-child. Every line and every laugh are as dry as a sand martini.

## A Touch Of Zen

1970

★★★★



FROM
**JANUARY 25**
CERT. **12**
DVD BR

**→ This three-hour colossus of Chinese cinema pioneered martial-arthouse: breath-stealing visuals, operatic action and complex, folklore-inspired plot. Without it, *Crouching Tiger* wouldn't exist. Masters Of Cinema's three-disc limited edition is suitably epic, and includes a corking documentary on the mighty King Hu.**

## The Quiet Man

1952

★★★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **U**
BR

→ Technicolor restorations are an unsung joy of the hi-def era. John Ford's Oirish take on *The Taming Of The Shrew* is a Hollywood perennial, but you've never seen it like this: the intense bursts of colour are eye-blazing. Needless to say, John Wayne's celebrated extended punch-up looks absolutely knockout.

## Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls

1970

★★★



FROM
**JANUARY 18**
CERT. **18**
DVD BR

**→ This may be cinema's most subversive sequel, not a follow-up but a deranged spoof of the original, styled as orgasmic kitsch. There's only one way to embrace Russ Meyer's tale of girl-band depravity: as a trash-fiesta that winks so hard, it breaks an eyelid. Meyer was well aware of its awfulness. Fabulously, he never told the cast it was a comedy.**

## Irreversible

2002

★★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT.**18**
DVD

→ A rape-revenge in reverse, Gaspar Noé's controversial thriller opens with retribution and ends in harmony. The structure suggests that time is a healer, but given Noé's taste for ultra-violence you may well end up with permanent brain-scars. Cinema as sense-attack, it's audience-hostile, unstable and boiling with nihilism. Enter its blood-red underpass at your peril...





# Kim Newman's MOVIE DUNGEON

## HAPPY NEW YEAR? NOT FOR THESE HAPLESS SOULS

ILLUSTRATION **JOHN ROYLE**

IN THE DUNGEON it's Hallowe'en all year round, so you can watch holiday horror-themed anthologies whenever you like. *Tales Of Halloween* offers ten separate treats (and one or two tricks). Highlights: Lucky McKee directing Pollyanna McIntosh (who'll be back) as a splendidly lurid witch, Axelle Carolyn going for shivers with the fable-like *Grim Grinning Ghost*, Mike Mendez having an alien play 'twick or tweat' with a slasher-movie villain, and Neil Marshall setting a cop on the trail of killer pumpkins. More modestly, *A Christmas Horror Story* weaves together strands about a haunted school, Santa fighting zombie elves, a changeling and Krampus the anti-Santa. Both are a lot of fun. Less engaging is *The Houses Of Halloween* (aka *The Houses October Built*), a found-footage tour of extreme funhouses with dim, doomed characters but nicely conceived monsters.

The world still doesn't need an *I Spit On Your Grave* franchise, but at least *I Spit On Your Grave III: Vengeance Is Mine* takes a new, *Death Wish*-ish direction. Dialling down the prurience of the earlier films, Sarah Butler, still traumatised by the first film, decides torturing and killing rapists makes her feel better than hugging it out in a therapy group. More sequelry: the literally beyond-a-joke *Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!*, which adds David Hasselhoff as a shark-fighting astronaut, and the tardy, nasty *Toolbox Murders 2* (aka *Coffin Baby*), a follow-up to a remake that came out ten years ago.

Unusual vampires show up in Guillermo Amoedo's Chilean-made, Canadian-set *The Stranger*, with Cristobal Tapia Montt as a glum bloodsucker coming back into the life of his estranged son, and Onur Tukel's indie chat-com *Summer Of Blood*, with Tukel as a whiny loser who gets turned into a vampire, then fouls up his new life as badly as the old one.

Angels of vengeance show up often. In Brian O'Malley's *Let Us Prey*, fallen angel Liam Cunningham is locked overnight in a remote Scots police station and WPC Pollyanna McIntosh (told you) realises he's come to persecute the oddly high number of murderers in the cells and in uniform. Adam Egypt Mortimer's *Some Kind Of Hate*, set in a camp for troubled teens, has Sierra McCormick as a ghost girl taking extreme measures against bullies.

Fans of old, obscure British haunted households should seek out *Castle Sinister* (1948), *Crow Hollow* (1952), *The Fall Of The House Of Usher* (1950) and (best of all) Michael Powell's *The Phantom Light* (1935), respectively set in a castle plagued by a monk spectre, a mansion beset by ominous birds and disquieting aunts, Poe's crumbling pile (with one of the best cackling hags in British cinema), and a fogbound lighthouse.

"WHOEVER HEARD OF THE PHANTOM APPEARING IN THE NIGHT AND PUSHING PEOPLE OVER CLIFFS?"
**CASTLE SINISTER**



## PICKS OF THE MONTH

### Fear Itself



→ Following his teen-movie documentary *Beyond Clueless*, Charlie Lyne delivers an impressionistic look at films dealing with fear, pulling in clips from *Enduring Love* and *Gravity* to address vertigo, for instance, as well as more straight-ahead scares from the likes of *Don't Look Now* and *Night Of The Demon*. Unsettling and insightful, it uses ambient music and narration, and concentrates especially on the often-neglected suspenseful build-ups rather than the horrific payoffs.

### The Skull




→ A classic Amicus horror scripted by Robert Bloch, this casts Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee as rival collectors of macabre curios. Cushing kills middle-man Patrick Wymark to obtain the skull of the Marquis de Sade and finds himself suffering bizarre nightmares and haunted by the floating, disembodied, malign relic. Briskly acted by great British talent, and imaginatively directed — note the skull POV shots, including faces perfectly framed by empty eye sockets — by Freddie Francis.

### Turbo Kid




→ This homage to 1980s video-rental sci-fi tat is set in post-apocalyptic 1997. A BMX-riding hero (Munro Chambers) teams up with Apple (the outstanding Laurence Leboeuf), a psychotically perky girlbot, against a water-hogging tyrant of the wasteland played by veteran video villain Michael Ironside. Writer-directors François Simard, Anouk Whissell and Yoann-Karl Whissell deftly switch from emulating Italian and Australian imitations of *Mad Max 2* — or such oddities as *Prayer Of The Rollerboys* and *Solarbabies* — to sloshing early Peter Jackson gore.

• ILLUSTRATION: PETER STRAIN (KIM PORTRAIT)

## KILL THE COMMUTE




**THE ROOM THREE**
**iOS, ANDROID**
This acclaimed puzzle/horror series continues with yet more beautifully rendered, mind-bending physics puzzles that will have you sliding panels on boxes and hunting for hidden compartments into the wee hours. As eerie and atmospheric as its predecessors, the third instalment expands the story's Lovecraftian mythos with a spooky train and a dank penitentiary.



**HEARTHSTONE: THE LEAGUE OF EXPLORERS**
**iOS, ANDROID**
The latest expansion to what is arguably mobile gaming's best title adopts an Indiana Jones-inspired theme. Tombs, tomes and traps must be navigated in a quest to unearth yet more cards for your online battle deck. If you're already a player, this is an essential upgrade. If not, then this accessible, event-themed expansion is the perfect way in.



# Star Wars Battlefront

★★★★

OUT **NOW / PC, PS4, XBOX ONE**

## WORLDS AT WAR

WE ALL KNOW WHAT this Christmas was *really* about: events that took place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. Thanks to *Star Wars Battlefront*, we can once again bury ourselves in the *Star Wars* universe, only without ever needing to leave the comfort of our living rooms.

Total immersion is what *Battlefront* is all about. Its iconic environments, taking in key locations like Tatooine and Endor, are among the finest-looking ever seen in a game, and you can play (albeit temporarily) as the likes of Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Darth Vader and even Emperor Palpatine. Meanwhile, for those still dazzled by J. J. Abrams' take on the *Star Wars* universe, the Battle of Jakku exists here to be played out in all its stormtrooper-slaying glory.

Gameplay-wise, *Battlefront* is easy to describe: it's pretty much identical to developer DICE's much-loved *Battlefield* franchise. Which, disappointingly, means it has no single-player campaign, although there are five training missions that act as an extended tutorial. You can take part in a number of battles (solo or with a friend, in split-screen or online), and there's a co-operative Survival mode in which you're beset by waves of enemies. But those effectively constitute a warm-up for the multiplayer, which is where the meat of *Battlefront* resides.

There are nine multiplayer modes, taking in the full gamut from Blast, (essentially Team Deathmatch) to full-on Imperial-versus-Rebel battles like Supremacy, Hero Hunt — which pitches a team against Jedis like Vader or Skywalker, then lets whoever kills that Jedi become one — and Fighter Squadron, in which you battle it out in an X-wing or TIE Fighter. In other words, you can do pretty much everything you ever wanted to do in the *Star Wars* universe.

Level up and you're awarded Star Cards, which bring new weapons and defensive items like shields; there are one-off power-ups on each battlefield, too. You soon discover your favourite modes, but therein lies a problem: without a campaign, *Battlefront* lacks the structure of, say, *Destiny*, so it's possible that you'll eventually tire of doing the same things over and over.

However, the thrill and joy of participating in the most epic *Star Wars* battles ever seen on gaming consoles outweighs any misgivings about a lack of substance, and Electronic Arts will continue to expand *Battlefront* as the months go on (although the Season Pass costs an outrageously steep £40). This is not a groundbreaking evolution of the competitive first-person shooter, but the moment you first step onto the battlefield as Vader and start force-choking Rebels in the middle of a firefight, you absolutely will not care. **STEVE BOXER**

# Terrence Malick: Rehearsing The Unexpected

★★★

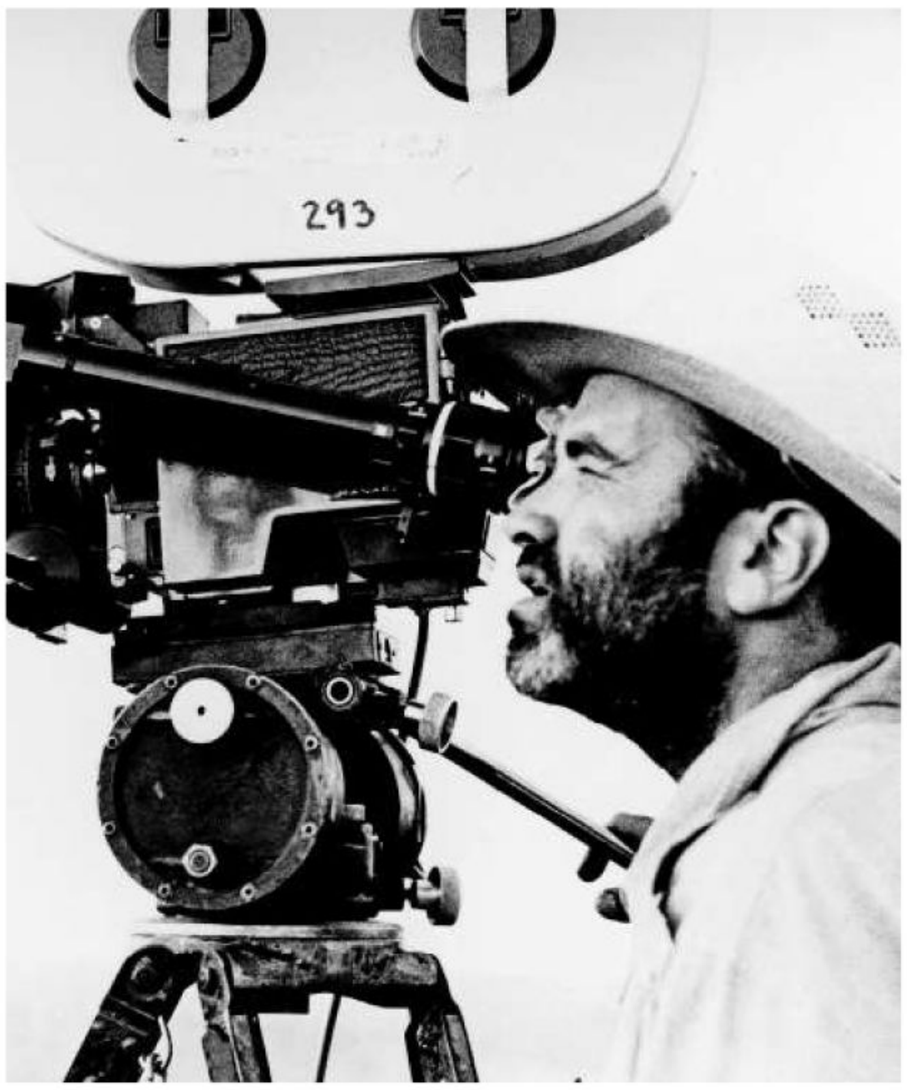
AUTHORS **DANIELE VILLA, CARLO HINTERMANN, LUCIANO BARACAROLI, GERARDO PANICHI** / OUT **NOW**

## AUTEUR THEORIES

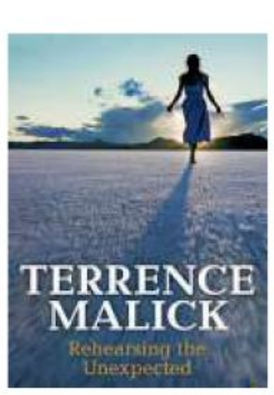
YOU KNOW YOU are reading a book about Terrence Malick when pages 94 and 95 are dedicated exclusively to wheat. Not a biography — everyone involved is terrified of speaking *for* the elusive director lest they get trapped in a permanent magic hour — *Rehearsing The Unexpected* utilises the transcripts of an Italian documentary and turns them into an admirably serious if stodgy film-by-film oral history, stopping at *The Tree Of Life*. The participants (Martin Sheen, Sissy Spacek, Richard Gere, Sean Penn, Jessica Chastain) are impressive. It's just a shame there is not more care and creativity in the assembly.

The book does a fascinating job of both cementing and debunking Malick's status as a vaunted auteur. Yes, he imported a llama for one shot in *Badlands*, only filmed for 20 minutes a day at twilight on *Days Of Heaven* and burned through 1.5 million feet of stock on *The Thin Red Line*. But he is also a keen collaborator and improviser, nurturing ideas from everyone, and is not above tampering with his beloved natural world — Hans Zimmer recalls how he spent a whole day positioning a coconut because it didn't look random enough. For techie geeks there are pleasing details around filmmaking craft, especially the VFX on *The Tree Of Life*. For pseuds, Malick's key themes — nature versus grace, take a bow — get a real going over. And despite everyone's best efforts, some glimpses into Malick the man poke through: he used to be a quarterback, he is a keen bird-spotter, and was a manic stunt driver on *Badlands*.

But what *Rehearsing The Unexpected* doesn't do, and this might be apt for a book about Malick, is tell a coherent story. The assemblage of quotes feels random and repetitive (Malick "flows like water" is trotted out regularly), and while there are critical voices — Arthur Penn takes down *Days Of Heaven* — it singularly avoids the sizzle. You could read the whole thing and not know the roster of actors (Gary Oldman, Viggo Mortensen et al) who got cut out of *The Thin Red Line*. Also, in a chapter partly titled 'The Absent Years', there is a measly two pages on his infamous 20-year hiatus. The same pagination as wheat. **IAN FREER**

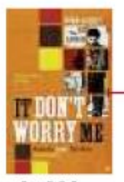



Malick behind the camera on 1978's *Days Of Heaven*.




## FURTHER READING

**BOOKS TO ENHANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE RECLUSIVE DIRECTOR**




**It Don't Worry Me (Ryan Gilbey)**
Gilbey's fun but insightful analysis of '70s American film takes in Malick, Coppola and beyond.



**The Thin Red Line (James Jones)**
Read James Jones' 1962 war classic, then compare and contrast to Malick's 1999 adaptation.



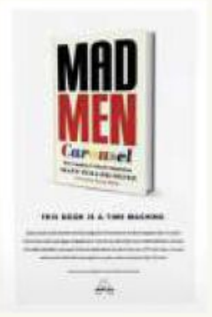
**The Cinema Of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions Of America (Hannah Patterson)**
Academic but rewarding essays on Malick's work.

## ALSO OUT

### Mad Men Carousel: The Complete Critical Companion

★★★★

AUTHOR **MATT ZOLLER SEITZ** / OUT **NOW**

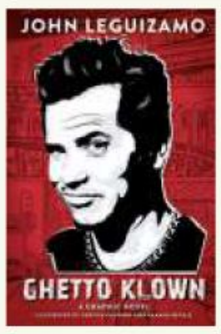



→ A suitably studious companion to an immaculately drawn show, this hefty tome gathers together TV critic Matt Zoller Seitz's riveting *Mad Men* recaps. Carefully tailored to suit both first-time and returning viewers — and with charming illustrations and poems dotted throughout — it gives good context while eschewing geekiness, making for a perceptive and heartfelt tribute to a televisual landmark. **EA**

### Ghetto Klown

★★★

AUTHOR **JOHN LEGUIZAMO** / OUT **NOW**

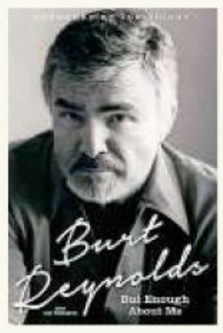



→ John Leguizamo has long been an unconventional actor. Now, with the release of this graphic-novel autobiography, he's an unconventional writer too. Charting his journey from "El Anus de Colombia" to "the scrotum of Queens, right next to the penis of Manhattan", it's a scattershot but frequently very funny account of his travails in "Hollywouldn't". Which include vomiting on Patrick Swayze and getting dropkicked by Steven Seagal. **JN**

### But Enough About Me

★★★★

AUTHOR **BURT REYNOLDS** / OUT **NOW**




→ Where Burt Reynolds' 1994 memoir *My Life* went through his turbulent life and careening career beat by beat, his follow-up focuses on the people closest to his heart. Packed with stories, it's warm and witty. But Gator bites too: Reynolds doesn't hold back on those who have rubbed his rhubarb, like Paul Thomas Anderson ("just a little pompous") or Donald Trump ("I hold onto my wallet when we shake hands"). **NDS**



# CRAIG ARMSTRONG

## THE *VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN* SCORER ON HIS GREATEST HITS AND ONE NEAR-MISS

WORDS **IAN FREER**

### 1 William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet 1996

There were elements of the songs, like Radiohead's *Talk Show Host*, that bled into the score. You went from out-and-out pop music to the end, where Romeo is walking through the church, that is very classical. It's almost nuts.

### 2 Moulin Rouge! 2001

The sets were just incredible. And you'd be working in a wee room then you'd breeze down to the studio and meet Kylie Minogue as the Green Fairy. They don't make films like that now, do they?

### 3 The Quiet American 2002

This was almost like a '70s film: lots of long scenes without cuts. The whole movie was just based on a few notes.

### 4 Love Actually 2003

Everyone was freaking out that there were far too many stories. One of the jobs of the music was to try and glue them together. *Love Actually* is one of these films where people love it or absolutely hate it. It's like liquorice.

### 5 Collateral 2004

Michael Mann wanted me to work on *Collateral* and I was very excited. Then he said, "I want it all to be fuzz guitars." It was like asking Massive Attack to write something for Kylie Minogue. It sounded like the start of a painful process, so I thought, "Let's just stay fans of each other's work."



**Above:** Daniel Radcliffe and James McAvoy go gothic in *Victor Frankenstein*. **Below:** Armstrong between notes.

### 6 World Trade Center 2006

I had been working in New York on *The Quiet American* on September 11, so this felt personal. There are a lot of good things in the film, but I think for the public the film was probably too soon after the event.

### 7 Neds 2010

(*Director*) Peter Mullan is quite subtle the way he uses music, but then he'll use a 15-minute piece of music for analogue synthesisers. You go, "I never thought you'd have done that!"

### 8 The Great Gatsby 2013

The main focus was the emotional journey with Gatsby. The score was that constant church bell in the background: however fun this party looks, don't forget we're going to end up in an empty mansion.

### 9 Far From The Madding Crowd 2015

(*Director*) Thomas Vinterberg is from the Dogme school. It's like, "Let's write a different score!" every day. Eventually I had this idea to make it for solo violin and a small orchestra. Thomas loved that.

### 10 Victor Frankenstein 2015

This pulled in a lot of film-music techniques. I had this idea that when the monster comes there would be big, heavy metal chords but, instead of using a guitar, I'd use a symphony orchestra. It gets terribly gothic towards the end.

***VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN* IS OUT NOW.**

## EMPIRE PLAYLIST

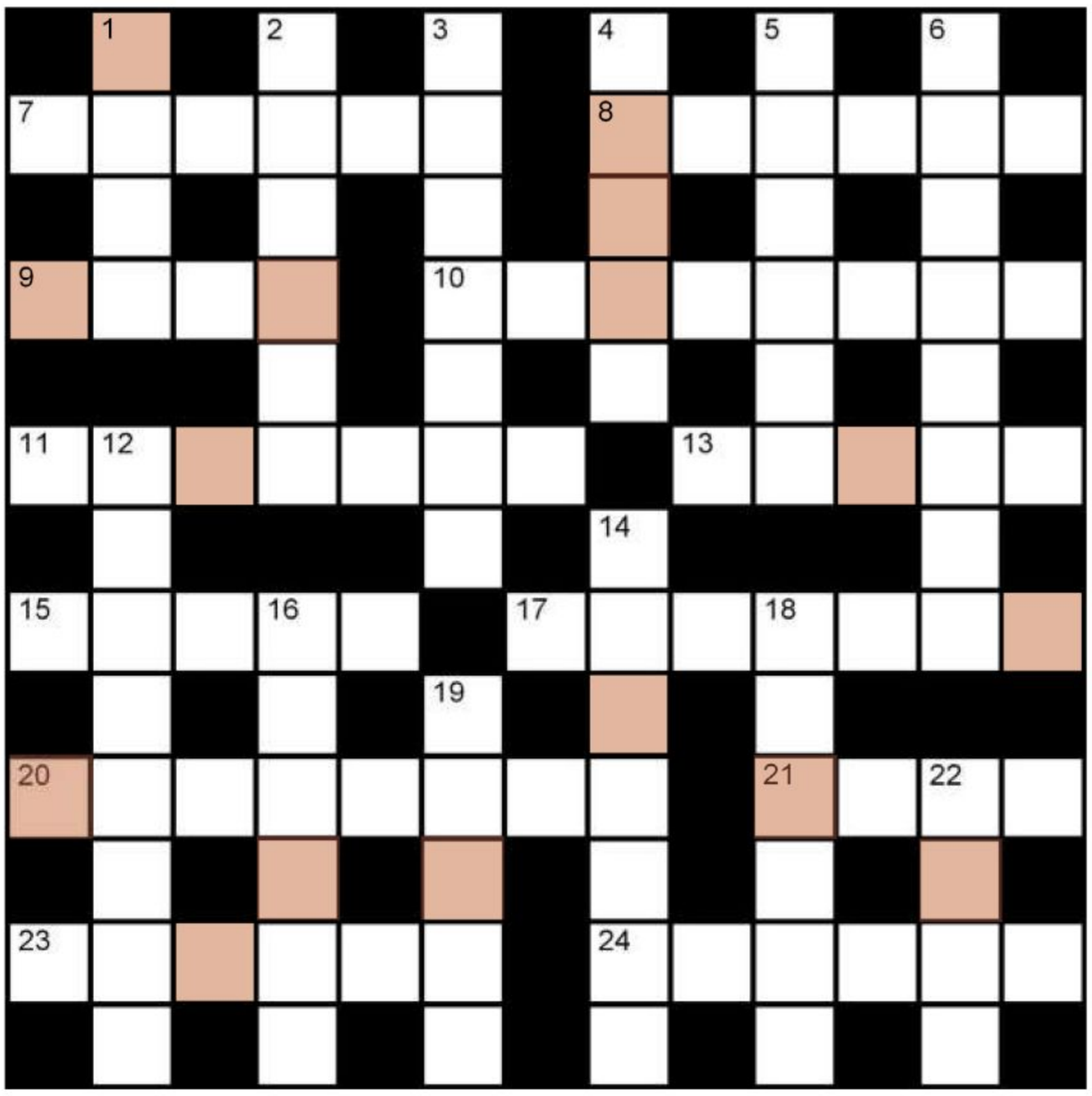


### Spaceships

1. Fire Up The Shuttle **Ryan Amon** Elysium
2. Final Test **Steve Jablonsky** Ender's Game
3. Lift Off **Bear McCreary** Europa Report
4. The Day We Fight Back **David Arnold** Independence Day
5. Day One **Hans Zimmer** Interstellar
6. Emergency Launch **Harry Gregson-Williams** The Martian
7. Welcome To Lunar Industries **Clint Mansell** Moon
8. Pandorum **Michl Britsch** Pandorum
9. Nailin' The Kelvin **Michael Giacchino** Star Trek
10. Battle In The Mutara Nebula **James Horner** Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan
11. Battle Of The Heroes **John Williams** Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge Of The Sith
12. Define Dancing **Thomas Newman** WALL•E

**TO LISTEN TO THE ABOVE, SEARCH 'EMPIRE MAGAZINE' ON SPOTIFY**

# THE EMPIRE CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

**7** Jules Dassin's French, trend-setting heist classic (6)
**8** Musical that won the Best Picture Oscar in 1969 (6)
**9** Moore located amid Cecil B. DeMille (4)
**10** It gave us the request, "And don't call me Shirley" (8)
**11** Were you bowled over by Woody Harrelson in this 1996 release? (7)
**13** Tomb Raider Lara (5)
**15** Disney classic that remains deer to the heart (5)
**17** 007's 24th adventure (7)
**20** It provided Kim Basinger with a phone-a-friend moment (8)
**21** Ellen who played Ariadne in Inception (4)
**23** The Coen brothers provided no country for them (3,3)
**24** Richard Donner's three-sequel deadly weapon (6)

**DOWN**

**1** It's like a box of chocolates, reckoned Forrest Gump (4)
**2** A Scandinavian like Tim Robbins' Erik (6)
**3** The tagline read, "The border is just another line to cross" (7)
**4** Legendary swashbuckler portrayed by Antonio Banderas in 1998 (5)
**5** The kind of Joe Matthew McConaughey once was (6)
**6** Lopez or Lawrence maybe? (8)
**12** Multi-award-winning actress Adjani (8)
**14** A 1976 musical concerning a sisterly vocal group (7)
**16** Robert Pattinson starrer based on a Guy de Maupassant novel (6)
**18** Role that gained Philip Seymour Hoffman an Oscar (6)
**19** Walker or Eastwood maybe (5)
**22** Director Danny Cannon's first in a football trilogy. (4)

# WIN!




SENSITIVELY RELATING THE STORY OF BEACH Boy Brian Wilson's struggle with mental illness during the 1960s and later abuse at the hands of an unscrupulous therapist, Love & Mercy — with an all-star cast including John Cusack, Paul Dano, Elizabeth Banks and Paul Giamatti — is out on DVD, Blu-ray and as a digital download on January 4. Insightful and revelatory, it's a gem of a movie well worth seeking out if you missed its theatrical run, whether you're a fan of music's perkiest (at least on the surface) band or not. To mark its release, we've got a copy of the film on Blu-ray plus a 43" smart LED TV and a Blu-ray player for one lucky winner. So if you've got good vibrations at the thought of all that swag, simply complete the crossword to the left, solve the anagram and text us your answer on the number below. Best of luck, pop pickers!

**LOVE & MERCY IS OUT AS A DIGITAL DOWNLOAD NOW, AND ON DVD AND BLU-RAY ON JANUARY 4.**

## Competition ends January 25

**HOW TO ENTER** Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, January 25. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

**JANUARY ANSWERS ACROSS 1** Jedi, **3** Mamma Mia, **9** High Art, **10** Clean, **11** Dragonslayer, **14** Her, **16** Steal, **17** Two, **18** Edward Norton, **21** Lloyd, **22** War Room, **23** Anderson, **24** Khan. **DOWN 1** John Dahl, **2** Dogma, **4** Act, **5** Michael Moore, **6** Mae West, **7** Anne, **8** Jacob's Ladder, **12** Speed, **13** Young Man, **15** Redford, **19** Tooth, **20** Alba, **22** Woo. **ANAGRAM JOHN BOYEGA**

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** One entry per person. Texts cost 50p + standard network rate. Ask the bill payer's permission before entering. Entries must be received before January 26 or will not be valid (but the cost of the text may still be charged). One winner will be selected at random. The model of the TV and Blu-ray may vary. Competition promoted by Bauer Consumer Media Limited t/a Empire ("Empire"). Empire's choice of winner is final and no correspondence will be entered into in this regard. The winner will be notified, by phone (on the number the text was sent), between seven and ten days after the competition ends. Empire will call the winner a maximum of three times and leave one message. If the winner does not answer the phone or respond to the message within 14 days of the competition's end, Empire will select another winner and the original winner will not win a prize. Entrants must be over 18, resident in the UK and not be employed by Empire. The prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Empire is not responsible for late delivery or unsatisfactory quality of the prize. Entrants agree to the collection of their personal data in accordance with Empire's privacy policy: http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/. Winner's personal details will be given to prize provider to arrange delivery of the prize. Bauer reserves the right to amend or cancel these terms or any aspect of the competition (including the prize) at any time if required for reasons beyond its control. Any questions, please email empire@bauermedia.co.uk. Complaints will not be considered if made more than 30 days after the competition ends. Winner's details available on request (after the competition ends) by emailing empire@bauermedia.co.uk. For full Ts&Cs see http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html.

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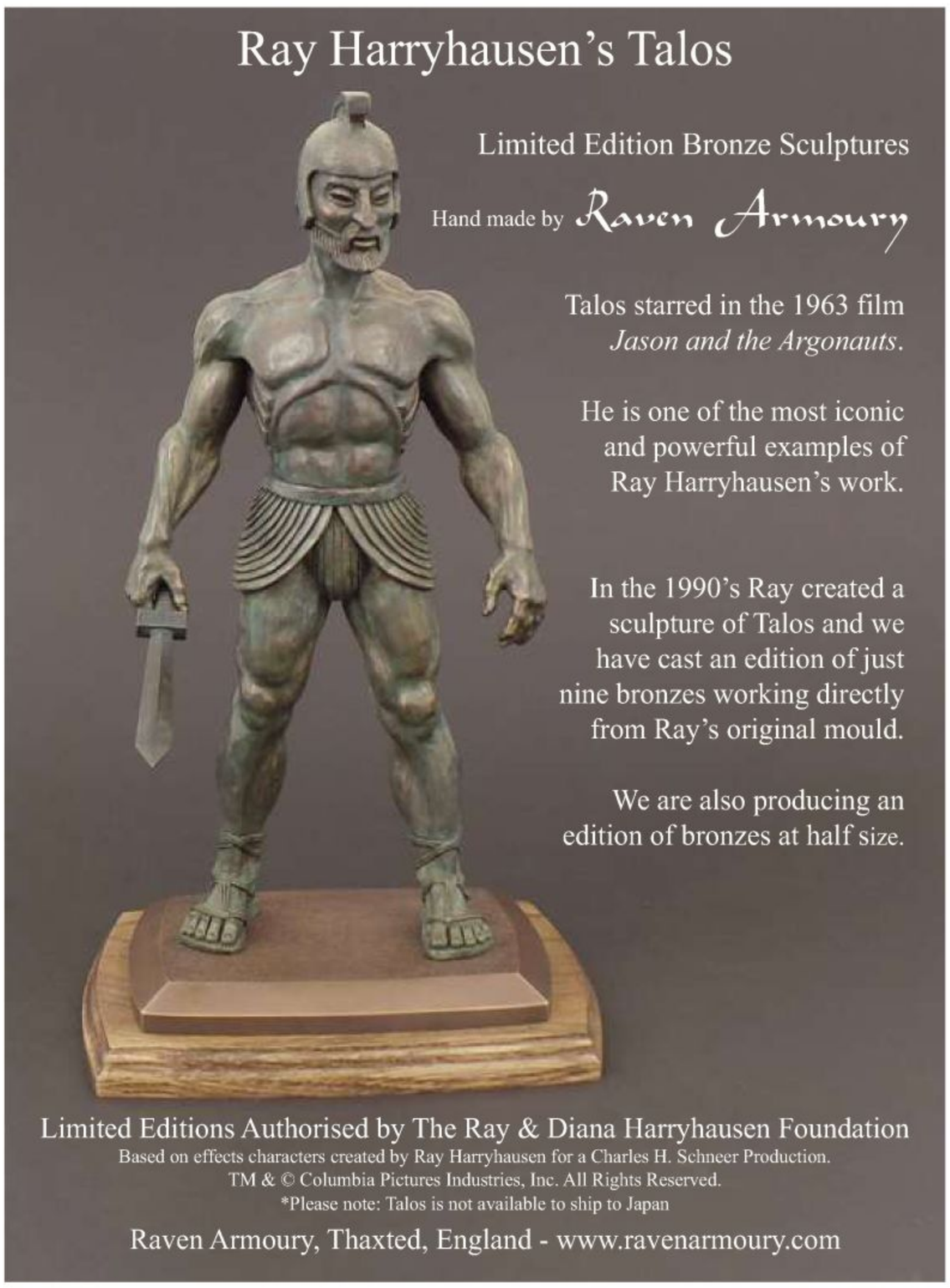
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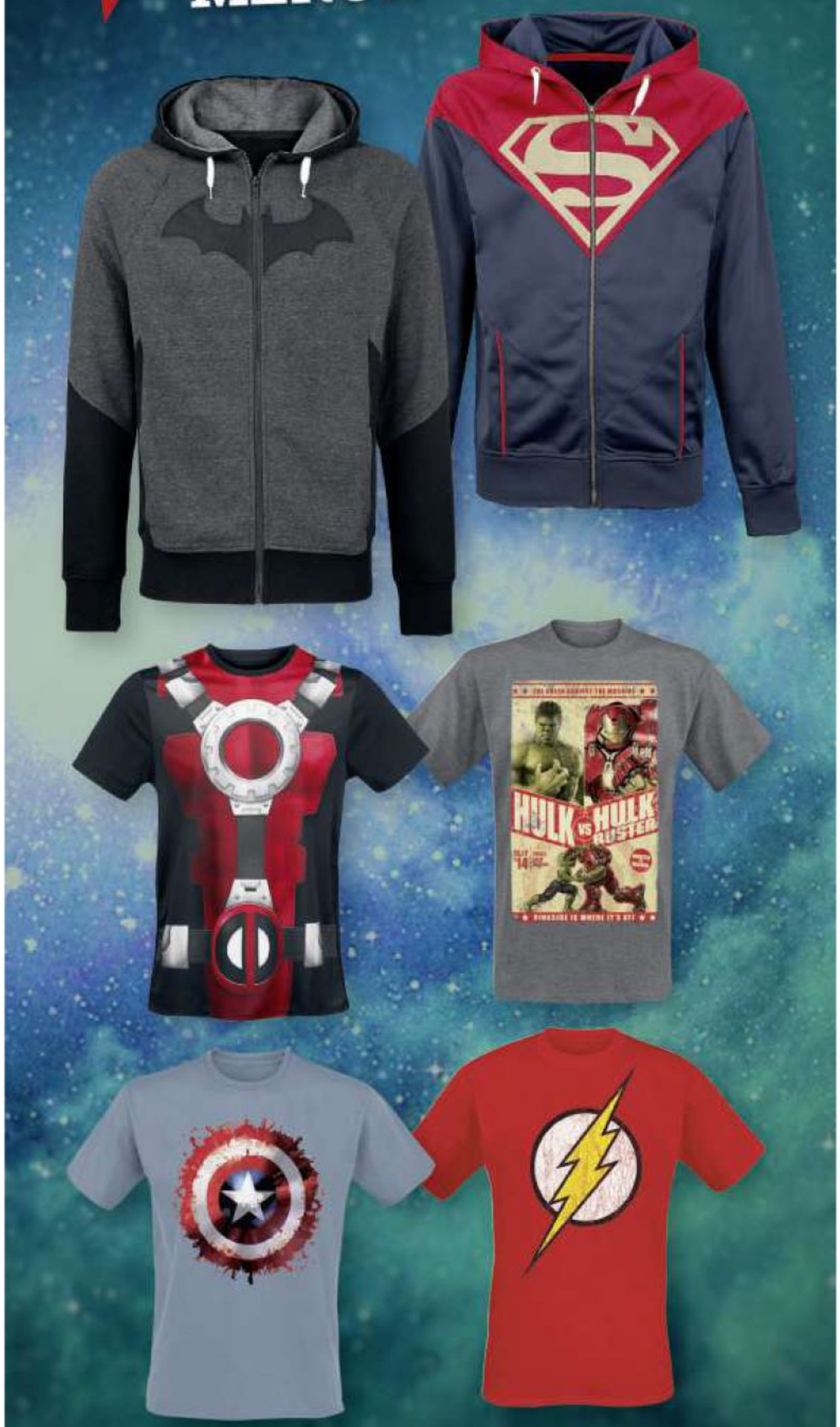
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# COMMENT



**PUNCH IT, CHEWIE**

My *Star Wars* memory? My big brother standing me up on the sideboard and attaching a string to my wobbly tooth and the Millennium Falcon, then letting go... and yes he grew up to be a qualified dentist!

**SARAH SPEIR, GLASGOW**

*Ouch. Reward yourself with a trip to Floss Eisley.*

@simonpegg I've had to stop reading your article in @empiremagazine as I couldn't focus through the tears.

**STEVE GALLAGHER (@STEVE_GALLAGHER)**



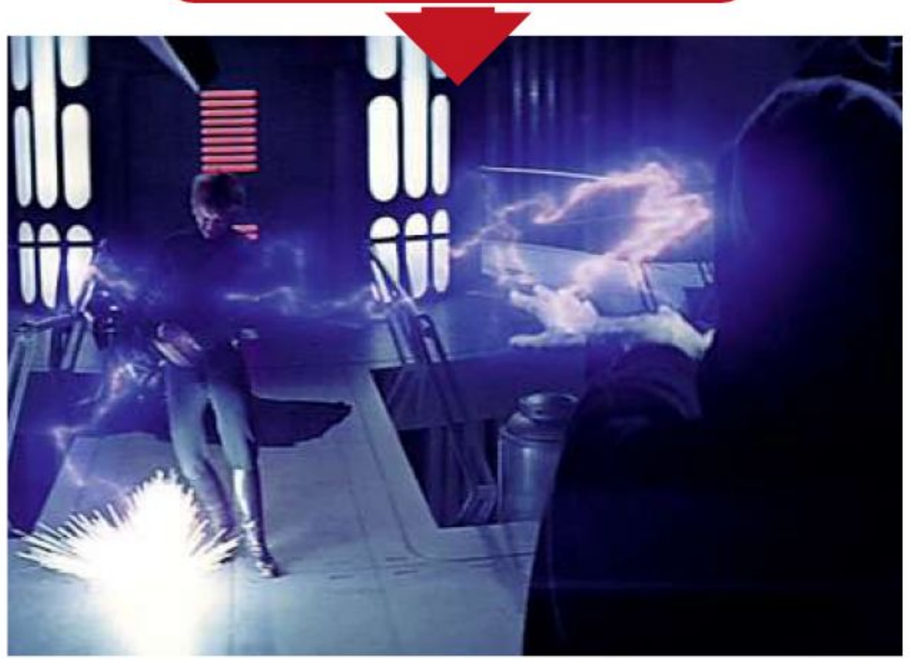
**HAVING A READ OF @EMPIREMAGAZINE WHEN THIS HAPPENED....**

**DANIEL QUIRKE (@DANQUIRKE)**

I feel my phone will blow up once the @empiremagazine #empiremagazinepodcast on #MissionImpossibleRogueNation has finished.

**@EDWARDLLEWELYN**

## LETTER *of the* MONTH



**LUCAS AID**

The moment that I made my peace with the *Star Wars* prequels: watching the films chronologically with my then seven year-old son, and seeing how differently he viewed Darth Vader because of them. We finally arrived at *Return Of The Jedi*, and at the climax, as Palpatine blasts Luke with Force lightning, Jake (normally a pretty relaxed film viewer) leapt to his feet, tears running down his face, and started yelling in anguish at the TV: "Help him, Anakin! ANAKIN! SAVE HIM! HE'S YOUR SON, ANNIE! HELP HIM!" I may have got something in my own eye at that point. Seems like George Lucas did know what he was doing, after all...

**TONE HITCHCOCK, BATH**

*Nice to see a spirited defence of the original blaster-master.*

**Empire's star letter wins a Picturehouse Membership, plus one for a friend! Valid for one year at 23 Picturehouse Cinemas across the UK, including the brand-new Picturehouse Central in London's West End, each membership comes pre-loaded with four free tickets, and gets you access to priority booking and exclusive discounts on everything in the cinema. When you write to us, please ensure you include your full contact details so we can arrange delivery of your prize.**



**BBC-8?**

I loved last month's issue on *The Force Awakens*. Seeing Daisy Ridley play Rey shows that it is possible to make the jump from British TV to the big screen. I'm waiting to see Gail Platt make a cameo as a Jawa in Episode VIII...

**SAM CANTON**

*Next you'll tell us Ant and Dec are going to make a film about an alien autopsy.*



**JEDI MAGUIRE**

Regarding the rumoured *Star Wars* cameos, isn't Tom Cruise a little short for a stormtrooper?

**DANIEL CLEMENTS, LEICESTER**

*Maybe, but you should see him cling onto the side of a Star Destroyer.*

**THE HUNGOVER GAMES**

Try watching all four *Hunger Games* movies back to back and every time someone on screen says the name "'PEEEEEETTTAHHHHHH!!!" you have to neck a shot of booze. By the end of *Catching Fire* I guarantee you will be spewing up.

**PHIL, BEXLEY**

*Thanks for the suggestion, Phil. For anyone attempting this, may the Berocca be forever in your favour.*



EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

# Night Of The Demon

## "MY TIME ALLOWED?"

**SETTING THE SCENE** **While let down by a demon that looks like the Chewits monster, Jacques Tourneur's 1957 horror classic remains a supremely creepy watch. Based loosely on M. R. James' short story *Casting The Runes*, it pits questioning academic John Holden (Dana Andrews) against diabolical Satanist/part-time children's entertainer Dr. Julian Karswell (Niall MacGinnis). After a visit to Karswell's country abode descends into chaos after it's hit by a freak storm, conjured by the host, it's revealed to Holden that he's been cursed — and hasn't got long to live.**

**INT. KARSWELL'S COUNTRY HOUSE — DAY**

**Holden:** Where are the others?

**Karswell:** They probably went round by the back.

**Holden:** I didn't know you had cyclones in England.

**Karswell:** We don't. You probably could use a drink.

**Holden:** The perfect host.

**Karswell:** This way.

**He leads Holden to a drinks cabinet in the drawing room and pours him a measure as the storm continues to rage outside.**

**Karswell:** I'm sorry. I miscalculated. The wind's stronger than I expected. Much too much.

**Holden:** You're talking in riddles.

**Karswell (*as he removes his clown make-up*):** To prove my point. A medieval witch's specialty: a windstorm.

**Holden:** Take my professional advice and stick to rabbits and puppy dogs.

**Karswell:** You think I'm mad? Unfortunately, you won't be able to explain away your death on the 28th of this month so easily, with my prediction of it at this moment.

**Holden (*seemingly amused*):** You're really serious, aren't you?

**Karswell:** You will die as I said... at ten o'clock on the 28th of this month. Your time allowed is just three days from now.

**Holden:** My time allowed? Oh, yes, your trick with the card. Very good too.

**Karswell:** I'm sorry you remain so sceptical. But as the time gets closer, mental disintegration will set in. First, weakness and unsureness. And then horror, as the fear of what is behind you grips your heart. Because it's there, Dr. Holden. It's there! It has been from the moment we met in the museum.

**Holden (*incredulous*):** You actually believe this nonsense.

**Karswell:** I asked you to drop this ridiculous investigation. Perhaps you will before it's too late.

**Holden:** Well, it's nice to know that I do have a way out, Mr. Karswell.

**Karswell:** The choice is yours.

**A thunderclap rings out.**

LIKE THIS, WATCH THIS




**DRAG ME TO HELL**

2009

**Sam Raimi's own riff on the you've-been-cursed thriller, with loan officer Alison Lohman cursed by a gypsy. The highlight: a séance involving a talking goat.**

the masterpiece of King HU

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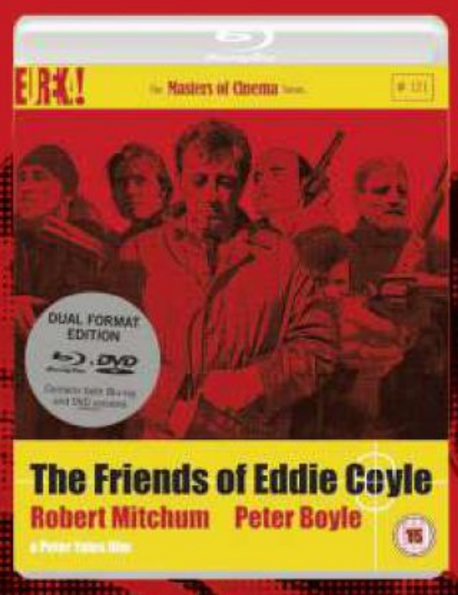
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a Peter Yates film




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